

Jesus' Greatest Hits

The Lost Sheep & The Lost Coin

Part 2 - May 6, 2007

Have you ever been lost in the woods? Imagine wandering for days – cold, wet, hungry ... hopeless – and then something miraculous happens. You hear someone calling your name. You don't know who it is, but you know they've come to rescue you.

When you came to the Lord, did you find Him, or did He find you?

Have you ever had a child wander away (in a crowded place, like a mall, or on vacation)? As a parent, you know the emotions involved in the search: the flood of relief with the first glimpse of your lost child; the overwhelming joy you experience when you're reunited.

In the parable of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coins, Jesus wants you to understand the flood of relief, and the overwhelming joy that your Heavenly Father felt when he found you.

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." - *Luke 15:1-10 NIV*

The *unrepentant* sinner is lost in three ways.



He's lost to the Shepherd – he's out of relationship with the one who guides and tends to his greatest needs. He's lost to the flock – he's out of fellowship with those who understand and support. And he's lost to life – he wanders aimlessly; unable to fulfill his purpose; exposed to natural elements and predators; unable to find rest.

Both of these stories have the same four acts:



1. Lost (something of value is missing)
2. Sought (a rescue mission is launched)
3. Found (the one searching has success)
4. Party (they throw a big celebration)

But, why tell *two* stories to make *one* point? It's amazing how Jesus covers all aspects of being lost, by making His point from two different perspectives:

- The sheep represents: Someone wandering away on their own
- The coin represents: Someone carelessly treated by others
- The sheep represents: Someone who is aware of their condition
- The coin represents: Someone who is unaware of the situation
- The sheep represents: Someone who is lost in the world
- The coin represents: Someone who is lost in the owner's home

You don't have to be *outside* the church to be separated from Jesus. In the crowd that day, the Pharisees and the teachers were the most religious *and* the farthest from Jesus.

Jesus went after *everyone's* heart that day. The story of the searching shepherd would hit home with the men and the boys in the crowd. And the story of the searching woman would relate to the ladies and the girls in the crowd.

These parables are masterly crafted stories! And they contain some very interesting statements, like *leaving* the ninety-nine. If you have four children, and one wanders off, would it be comforting if someone said, "At least you have three left"?

When he finds it, he *joyfully* puts it on his *shoulders*. Ever had to chase down a rebellious, pet dog? It usually takes self-control not to give it a few good kicks on the way home ... just to punctuate the verbal abuse ... which makes him even less likely to come, the next time you call. In contrast, the shepherd offers his wandering sheep a place of privilege and intimacy that it never knew before. He doesn't even lead it; he shoulders the load, and carries it! It's a picture of Jesus carrying out the work of restoration.

There's more rejoicing over a sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons *who don't need to repent*. What does Jesus mean: "Who don't need to repent?" He's referring to the self-righteous. It's very similar to:

It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. - *Luke 5:31-32 NIV*

Jesus certainly wasn't rejecting the righteous! He obviously meant those who *think* they're righteous apart from Him. And with the 99, He means those who *think* they don't need to repent.

When they muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them” they insinuated that they themselves are not “sinners”. The religious leaders not only failed to understand that the Messiah came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), they refused to believe that they were among the lost!



Then he switches to the woman with the coins. Many scholars believe He’s referring to a string of dowry coins that married woman commonly wore in Jesus’ day. It was similar in custom to a wedding ring.

Picture a bride in her white wedding dress at the reception, suddenly realizing a diamond was missing from her ring. Social decorum is out the window! She’s on her hands and knees, crawling under the tables. And when she finds it she and her bridesmaids celebrate; torn veil, tattered dress and all! This is how God feels about *you!* You’re precious, and you’re worth the search. And He’ll get on His hands and knees for a chance to carry you on His shoulders.



She lights a lamp and sweeps the house and searches carefully. If she only wore ten coins in her dowry, she’s quite poor. A peasant’s house would have a low doorway, few if any windows, and it’d be dark even during the day. The floor would be dirt and stones, probably covered with straw to keep out the cold and damp.

These floors had so many crevices, that archaeologists now use the coins from the cracks to date when the owners lived there. The lamp would help her catch the glint of the coin. The broom would help her to hear the clink of metal.

In both stories, they call their friends to share their joy. And twice Jesus says that this is how it is in Heaven. I used to picture the angels rejoicing, and God giving a dignified nod from His throne, but my perspective has changed.

Q: According to Jesus, who does the rejoicing?

“There will be more rejoicing in heaven ...”

“There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God ...”

The angels are there to *witness* the rejoicing. God rejoices whenever He gets to restore. And God gets to restore when a sinner repents. And although the focus of the parable is on God’s role, Jesus makes it clear that rejoicing is triggered by repentance. It goes like this: First, God does the seeking and searching. Then, man does the repenting and receiving. Then, God does the restoring and rejoicing.



Do you remember Farrell’s Ice Cream Parlor? If it was your birthday, a siren would blast, they’d beat a big bass drum, and they’d gather and sing. That’s my picture of the throne room now. Where were you when Heaven’s bells and whistles went off?

You may have been in the depths of despair, but when you received Christ, the angels got to watch God shout and dance! This is a God the Pharisees couldn't comprehend.

Q: Do you know why this parable is so heartwarming?

A: Because we relate to the sheep and the coin.

Maybe we should try to relate more to the Pharisees. What if this was in *our* day and the passage began like this:

Now the abortionists, the terrorists, the drug-pushers and the pedophiles were all gathering around to hear Jesus.

Q: Wouldn't you be doing a little "thinking out loud"?



Jesus told this parable to defend the fact that He didn't just tolerate these conspicuous sinners, he enjoyed their company! The scandal and shock of this parable was that: Sinners aren't a contamination to be avoided, but a treasure to be sought

And if we're going to be used by God, our lives need to produce the kind of atmosphere that makes conspicuous sinners want to be found and forgiven, not feel judged and condemned.

TRUE OR FALSE

Let's see how well you've been listening. I want you to answer out loud: "True" or "False". In this parable, we learn that:

1. Some people are like quarters, some are like pennies.
2. The shepherd sent an assistant shepherd to find the sheep.
3. When *you* received Jesus, God probably shouted and danced.
4. The Shepherd rode the sheep back to the flock.
5. Jesus told this parable to reveal the heart of the Father.

The prophet Isaiah said this concerning the Messiah:

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. - *Isaiah 53:6 NIV*

You and I will treasure this Gospel only to the degree that we recognize and realize how lost we are when we stray from it.