



JESUS, FRIEND OF SINNERS

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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Jesus, Friend of Sinners

SERMON REFERENCE: Luke 15:1-22

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2472

Adrian Rogers says, "A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning."

In Luke 15, Jesus responds to the Pharisees' criticism with three parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. In these three stories, we see how much God loves us, and why Jesus is a friend of sinners.

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?" (Luke 15:4).

Sheep are dumb and defenseless; they are completely dependent on shepherds to protect them from predators. They can't find their way home. In spiritual terms, we are very much like sheep.

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?" (Luke 15:8).

A coin is meant to be spent or treasured, but one that is lost is worthless and unprofitable. This coin was lost in darkness, dirt, and disgrace. Likewise, we were created to know, love, and serve God; when we are lost, we are worthless.

"...A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood..." (Luke 15:11-12).

In this final parable, Jesus begins the story of the lost son. After he received his inheritance and squandered it, there was a deep depression in the land. As a result, the son was broke; he was degraded to feeding pigs in a foreign country, which brought great dissatisfaction.

Like this lost son, we've gone astray and find ourselves desperate and spiritually starving.

These parables not only explain the sinful nature of Man, but they also reveal the saving nature of God. Jesus Christ is the shepherd who rescues the lost sheep. The woman searching for her lost coin represents the Holy Spirit. God our Father is the father running to receive his prodigal son.

God loves us; He is the Good Shepherd seeking us. He is the Holy Spirit shining light upon us. And He is the Father with arms open wide, welcoming us home.

Life Application

Have you been rescued, revealed, and received by God? Worship God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit today. Let Him begin a good work in your heart.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) In Luke 15, the Lord Jesus shared a story about how much God loves us.
- b) You may think that you've sinned too much, have gone too far, and have refused so long that God has written you off.
 - i) You may think that there is no hope for you.
 - (1) Today's message will remove that idea from your mind.
- c) Luke 15:1
 - i) Notice that he said "publicans and sinners".
 - (1) In that day, it was almost like one word.
 - (2) The publicans were the tax collectors.
 - (a) They were hated.
 - (b) Most of them were crooks.
 - ii) They were coming to hear the Lord Jesus Christ.
- d) Luke 15:2
 - i) The Pharisees were criticizing the Lord Jesus Christ for spending time with publicans and sinners.
 - (1) Every church sometimes has people who are critics.
 - (2) They were criticizing the very Son of God.
 - (3) Those who were doing the criticizing were the elite.
 - (a) They were the high society of religion in that day.
 - (i) We might call them the upper crust.
 - (b) They were held together by religion.
 - (i) But they didn't have Jesus.
 - (c) They were the up and out.
 - (i) The publicans and the sinners were the down and out.
 - ii) What the Lord Jesus Christ teaches in this passage is that He loves all.
 - (1) Wherever you may be, God loves you.
 - e) Jesus is a friend to sinners.
 - i) Where would we be if Jesus Christ was not a friend of sinners?
 - f) When they criticized the Lord Jesus, He gave a parable.
 - i) A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.
 - ii) Luke 15:3
 - g) Some people think that in Luke 15 there are three parables, but it is really one parable with three parts to it:
 - i) A lost sheep
 - ii) A lost coin
 - iii) A lost son
 - (1) Jesus speaks of their needs, and He tells why He loves them.
 - h) In today's message, we will look at the three parts to this parable, as we look at the sinful nature of man and the saving nature of God.

**2) THE SINFUL NATURE OF MAN (LUKE 15:4, 8-9, 11-19)**

- a) The sinful nature of man is our nature.
- b) The weakness of man without God:
 - i) We are weak like a lost sheep.
 - (1) Luke 15:4
 - (2) A sheep is one of the weakest animals around.
 - (3) A sheep is dumb.
 - (a) If we go to the circus, then we might see a trained elephant, a trained lion, or a trained horse.
 - (i) But we will never see a trained sheep.
 - (b) We may sometimes think that because we are sheep, we are being praised.
 - (i) But this is not the case.
 - (ii) We are sheep, but a sheep is dumb.
 - (c) Because a sheep is dumb, he cannot find his way home.
 - (i) He will browse here, nibble there, and eat here until he gets further and further away.
 - (d) A sheep strays; therefore, it needs a shepherd.
 - (e) Romans 3:11
 - (i) If you are without the Lord Jesus Christ, then you do not understand the things of God.
 - (f) Without Jesus, you are like a sheep.
 - (4) A sheep is defenseless.
 - (a) A horse can run.
 - (b) The tiger can claw.
 - (c) The wolf can bite.
 - (d) The cat can scratch.
 - (e) What can a sheep do?
 - (f) This is an earthly story with a spiritual meaning.
 - (i) Jesus was saying that the devil's coyotes and vultures are after you.
 - 1. You will not escape.
 - (5) A sheep is dependent.
 - (a) Matthew 9:36
 - (b) It has been said that after sheep feed on grass, they will lie down and stretch out to digest their food.
 - (i) But if there is a crevice or a hollow place, sometimes the center of gravity will shift, and the sheep will find himself on his back.
 - (ii) A sheep does not have enough agility to get up, and he just paws the air.
 - 1. When he does that, he begins to bloat, and the circulation is cut off to his legs.
 - 2. After a while, he will die.
 - a. It is so dependent upon the shepherd, and so are we.
 - (c) The good shepherd gets back to the fold at night, and he counts his sheep.
 - (i) He has one hundred sheep.
 - 1. Ninety-nine are there, but one is missing.



- (ii) He goes out to find the missing sheep who is so dependent upon the shepherd to put him back on his feet.
 - (iii) Luke 15:4
 - (d) Jesus was asked why He kept company with sinners.
 - (i) He said that they are weak like a sheep.
 - ii) We are worthless like a lost coin.
 - (1) Luke 15:8-9
 - (a) Jesus was talking here about lost silver.
 - (b) Here was woman who lost a valuable coin.
 - (i) She needed that coin and wanted that coin.
 - 1. So, she searched for that coin.
 - (2) We are worthless like a lost coin.
 - (a) When a coin is minted, it is meant to be spent or treasured.
 - (i) It is not to be lost.
 - (3) God made us to serve Him.
 - (a) Until we serve Him, we are not only weak like a lost sheep, but we are also worthless like a lost coin.
 - (4) Without Jesus, we are worthless.
 - (a) We have all gone out of the way.
 - (b) Together, we have become unprofitable.
 - (i) If a coin is lost, then it is not profitable.
 - 1. A treasure that is lost is no treasure.
 - (5) We may think that we are very profitable, but this is talking about the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - (a) The Lord was talking about the worthlessness of man without God.
 - (i) God created us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him.
 - (6) How did this coin get lost?
 - (a) It was lost in the darkness.
 - (i) Luke 15:8
 - (ii) This coin, like every unsaved person, is in darkness.
 - 1. Because the god of this world has blinded their minds.
 - (b) It was lost in the dirt.
 - (i) Luke 15:8
 - 1. She was sweeping the house, disturbing the dirt, hoping to find the coin.
 - (c) It was lost in disgrace.
 - (i) Luke 15:8
 - (ii) Jesus speaks of ten pieces of silver.
 - 1. He does not say, "Which of you having a piece of silver loses it."
 - a. He talks of ten pieces of silver, and one is lost.
 - 2. Ten is the complete number, like seven is the perfect number.
 - a. In Bible symbolism, "ten" means "completeness".
 - (iii) Why was it lost in disgrace?
 - 1. Back in this day, a husband would give to his wife ten pieces of silver.
 - a. There would be a hole in the center of each piece of silver with a ribbon that would go through them.



- b. The husband would engrave his name on it.
 - 2. The wife would wear these coins across her face.
 - a. This was similar to our wedding rings and engagement rings of today.
 - b. They spoke of the loyalty of her husband to her and she to him.
 - 3. If she was unfaithful, then they would take a coin right out of the center.
 - a. There would be a hideous gap there.
 - b. She would be disgraced.
 - i. We can understand why she was frantically seeking this coin.
 - (iv) God loves us, and He wants us to be His.
 - 1. But the devil wants to make us a disgrace to God.
 - (7) Jesus was asked why He kept company with sinners.
 - (a) This is why He did it.
- iii) The wretchedness of man away from God:
 - (1) The third thing that Jesus told was a story of a lost son.
 - (2) Luke 15:11-12
 - (a) Both sons got the same amount.
 - (b) The inheritance was normally given when the father died, but the younger son wanted his now.
 - (i) It was a way of saying the following to his father:
 - 1. I wish you were dead.
 - 2. I don't need you.
 - 3. I don't want your love.
 - 4. I don't want your fellowship.
 - 5. I don't want your authority over me.
 - 6. I just want what you have; I don't want you.
 - (3) There are many people just like this today.
 - (a) They don't want God, but they want what God has.
 - (i) They walk on God's green Earth.
 - (ii) They breathe God's fresh air.
 - (iii) They live on the abundance that God has given, including the rain and the sunshine.
 - 1. But they don't want God.
 - (4) He was a wretched boy because he was away from home.
 - (a) Luke 15:13
 - (b) He went to a far country.
 - (i) There, he wasted what his father had given him, living high, wide, and handsome.
 - 1. He spent money like it was water in his hands.
 - (5) Luke 15:14-19
 - (a) What is the fruit of this kind of sin?
 - (i) There was depression.
 - 1. There arose a famine in that land.
 - a. "Famine" in Luke 15:14 is just another word for "depression".
 - 2. Some say that they are not in depression; they have a lot in the bank.
 - a. Soon it will leave them, or they will leave it.



3. Don't boast about what you have, about your strength, about your friends, or about your intellect.
 - a. Jesus said that there will be a depression.
- (ii) There was degradation.
 1. This young Jewish man went to work for a stranger who had him feeding pigs.
 2. Luke 15:14-15
 3. Jesus gave this parable to the Pharisees.
 - a. It was a Jewish audience.
 4. This was a Jewish boy.
 - a. A self-respecting Jew would not touch a pig.
 5. In this parable, he was slopping the hogs and wanting some of the swill that the hogs ate.
 - a. Luke 15:16
- (iii) There was dissatisfaction.
 1. He was hungry.
 2. He didn't have anything to satisfy his deepest longings.
 - a. Jesus was talking in a spiritual sense.
 - b. Without the Father, there is a gnawing hunger inside every person.
 - i. You may be wearing a mask today.
 - ii. You may be laughing and going on your way.
 - iii. But down in your heart, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, then there is a hunger for God.
 - iv. If you don't know Jesus, then there is a God-shaped vacuum in your heart.
- iv) In this parable, the Lord talked about the following:
 - (1) The weakness of man without God is like a lost sheep.
 - (2) The worthlessness of man is like a lost coin.
 - (3) The wretchedness of man away from God is like a lost son.
 - (a) Jesus said that this is why He kept company with sinners.

3) THE SAVING NATURE OF GOD (LUKE 15:17-22)

- a) In this parable, there were three who would go out and seek that which was lost:
 - i) The shepherd
 - ii) The woman
 - iii) The father
- b) We will learn something about the nature of God as we look at these people.
 - i) The shepherd represents the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - ii) The woman represents the Holy Spirit.
 - iii) The father represents the loving Father in Heaven.
- c) The shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - i) The sheep is lost; the shepherd is Jesus.
 - ii) The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
 - (1) John 10:11



- iii) The nature of Jesus is to seek the lost.
- iv) Why did Jesus come to this Earth?
 - (1) He didn't come primarily as a teacher.
 - (2) He didn't come as a healer.
 - (3) He came as a Savior.
 - (a) Luke 19:10
 - (b) 1 Timothy 1:15
 - (i) That is the nature of the Lord Jesus.
- v) If Jesus is in your heart, then you are going to want to go out after the lost.
 - (1) If you don't care about lost people, then you had better check up on that thing you call salvation.
 - (a) Because the nature of Jesus is to rescue the perishing.
- vi) He is the seeking Savior.
- vii) When the Lord told this story, He spoke of a shepherd who represented Him.
- viii) In the shepherd, we see the rescuing nature of God.
- d) The woman represents the Holy Spirit of God.
 - i) Not only do we see the rescuing nature of God in the shepherd, but in the woman, we see the revealing nature of God.
 - ii) What this woman did was to light a candle because the coin was lost in the darkness.
 - (1) This is what God the Holy Spirit wants to do in your heart.
 - (a) To light a candle so that you can see the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - iii) Without the Holy Spirit, you will never understand.
 - (1) It is the Spirit who gives light.
 - (2) It is not a sermon or an outline that gives light.
 - (a) It is the Holy Spirit of God.
 - (3) God wants to light the candle of hope in your heart.
 - iv) She lights a candle, and she begins to sweep.
 - (1) The candle speaks of illumination.
 - (2) The broom speaks of disturbance.
 - (a) This is conviction.
 - (b) She begins to sweep and to stir up all of the filth and dirt.
 - (3) If God is working on you, then you will see the candle, and you will feel the broom.
 - (a) If you do not have that, then wait before God until He sends it to you.
 - v) The coin was lost in darkness, lost in dirtiness, and lost in disgrace.
- e) The father represents God the Father.
 - i) This is the receiving nature of God the Father.
 - ii) The son was down in the pigpen, and he came to himself, realizing that his father's servants were better off than he.
 - iii) Luke 15:17-22
 - (1) The ring was a sign of sonship.
 - (2) The slaves did not wear a robe or shoes.
 - (3) The father was receiving back his lost son.
 - (a) It is one of the most moving pictures in all of the Bible.
 - iv) The father had been longing for his son.
 - (1) When he saw his son, he began to run down the road to meet the boy.



- (a) This is a picture of God the Father.
- v) In the Bible, God moves with deliberate majesty.
 - (1) In every other place when we read about God the Father, He is never late, and He is never in a hurry.
 - (a) We are told to wait on God.
 - (2) But here is a picture of God in a hurry.
 - (a) We can see the father as he gathers up his robes and runs to meet the boy coming home.
 - (b) If you want to come to Him, then God will run to receive you.
 - (i) He loves you.

4) CONCLUSION

- a) Why did Jesus keep company with sinners?
 - i) They are weak like sheep.
 - ii) They are worthless like a lost coin.
 - iii) They are wretched like a lost son.
 - (1) That is the nature of sinful man.
- b) The nature of Almighty God:
 - i) There is the rescuing nature of God the Son.
 - ii) There is the revealing nature of God the Spirit.
 - iii) There is the receiving nature of God the loving Father.
- c) God loves you.
- d) The Good Shepherd is seeking you.
- e) The Holy Spirit is shining light on you.
- f) God the Father has His arms open wide.
 - i) "Whosoever will may come."
 - (1) Revelation 22:17
- g) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- h) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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SERMON REFERENCE: Luke 15:1-22

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I would like for you to find in your Bibles, Luke chapter 15. And if you have been on the trail for a while, you'll recognize this as a story that Jesus told about how much God loves you. Now perhaps you think, "You know, Pastor, I have sinned so much. I have gone so far. I have refused so long that God has written me off. There is no hope for me." Well, I want to take that idea out of your head today. And we're going to look here in Luke chapter 15, and I want us to get the setting. Luke 15 verses 1 and 2, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." Now notice he said publicans and sinners. In this day it was almost like one word. The publicans were the tax collectors. They were hated and they were crooks, most of them. So then, they're coming now to hear the Lord Jesus Christ. Now look, if you will, in verse 2, "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.'" What they were doing was criticizing the Lord Jesus Christ for spending time with publicans and sinners.

Now these Pharisees, in whom the milk of human kindness had curdled, began to criticize. I want to say to you, it doesn't take a lot of size to criticize, and every church sometimes has people who are critics. One pastor said, "Brother Jones, would you stand and lead us in a word of criticism?" And they're criticizing, but they're criticizing the very Son of God. Now these who were these that were doing this criticism? These were the elite. These were the high society of religion in that day. We might call them the upper crust. Somebody said, "The upper crust are a lot of rich people held together by dough." But, you see, these were held together by religion, but they didn't have Jesus. Now they were the up and out. And then the publicans and the sinners were the down and out. But what the Lord Jesus Christ is going to teach in this passage is that He loves all. And I want to stand here today and tell you, precious friend, wherever you may be, God loves you. And the title of the message is this, "Jesus, Friend of Sinners." I rejoice that He is a friend of sinners, don't you? I'm telling you where would I be if Jesus Christ were not a friend of sinners? Thank God that He was. Thank God that He is.

Now when they criticized the Lord Jesus, Jesus gave a parable. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. So Jesus told these stories, and the Bible says here He gave a parable. Now some people think in this fifteenth chapter there are three parables, but really, it's a parable with three parts to it. And what He does, He talks here in this parable about a lost sheep. Then He talks about some lost silver. Then He talks about a lost son. And He tells their needs, and He tells why He loves them.

So let's look, first of all, at what I want to call **the sinful nature of man**. This is your nature, my nature, our nature; the sinful nature of man. For example, we are weak like a sheep. Look, if you will, in Luke 15:4 now, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?"

Now a sheep is one of the weakest animals around. Let me tell you about a sheep. First of all, **a sheep is dumb**. I mean, they're stupid. You know, if you go to the circus you might see a trained elephant, a trained lion, a tiger, a horse, a dog; you've never seen a trained sheep. A sheep is, you know, he's dumb. Now sometimes we think that because we're sheep, we're being praised. No. We are sheep, but a sheep is



dumb. And because he's dumb, he can't find his way home. He'll browse here, nibble there, and eat here, and he gets further and further away, and he can't find his way home. A dog can find his way home. A horse finds his way home. A cow can find her way home. But a sheep, because it's dumb, this sheep strays from God and therefore, they need a shepherd. Now Romans chapter 3 verse 11 speaks of how dumb sheep are. It says, "There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God." If you're here without the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to tell you something, you do not understand the things of God. Now you say, "Wait a minute, pastor. I made good grades in school. I run a business. I'm a lawyer, I'm a doctor, I'm an entrepreneur, I'm this, I'm that." Friend, without Jesus: can I say this nicely? You're dumb, you're dumb. I mean, you're like a sheep. A sheep is dumb.

And not only is a sheep dumb, but friend, a **sheep is defenseless**. Now you think about it. A horse can run, the tiger can claw, the wolf can bite, the cat can scratch. What can a sheep do? Now you say, "Well, wait a minute. I'm strong. I've got finances." No, listen, we're talking on a spiritual plane; it's an earthly story with a spiritual meaning. What Jesus says is, "The devil's coyotes is after you. The devil's vultures are after you. The devil's mountain lions are after you." And you'll not escape. Like a sheep, we're dumb. Like a sheep, we're dependent and defenseless.

W. Phillip Keller, in his book, "A Shepherd Looks at the 23rd Psalm," talks about a sheep being so dependent. You know, that's the reason why Jesus, in Matthew chapter 9 and verse 36, when He saw the multitudes, "Was moved with compassion, for He saw them as sheep having no shepherd."

They say that a sheep, Keller says in this book, and he was a sheep herder, he said that sometimes a sheep will feed on the green, succulent grass. And then the sheep will lie down and stretch out to digest that food. But if there's a crevice there or a hollow place, sometimes the center of gravity will shift and he'll find himself on his back. Now a sheep does not have enough agility to get up and he can't, he just paws the air. And when he does that, the gases begin to fill up in his stomach. He begins to bloat, and the circulation is cut off to his legs. And after a while, he will be dead. He is so dependent upon the shepherd. So am I. So are you.

Now the good shepherd gets back to the fold at night and he counts his sheep. He has 100 sheep. Ninety and nine are there, but one is missing. And he goes out to the mountainside to find that missing sheep who is so dependent upon the shepherd to put him back on his feet. Now, friend, Jesus was asked, "Why do you keep company with sinners?" He said, "They're weak like a sheep."

And then He gives another parable, if you will. Look, if you will, here in Luke 15 verse 8 and 9, "Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece that I had lost.'" Jesus talks about a lost sheep, now He's talking about lost silver. Here's a woman who lost a valuable coin, and she needs that coin. She wants that coin, and so she is searching for that coin, because not only is man weak like a sheep; he is worthless like a lost coin.

You see, when a coin is minted, it is meant to be spent or else treasured, but it is not to be lost. Now God made you to serve Him, and until you serve Him, not only are you weak like a sheep; you are worthless like a lost coin. You say, "Well, now wait a minute, I'm not worthless." Without Jesus you are. The Bible teaches this very clearly and plainly in Romans 3:12 that, "We have all gone out of the way; together we've become unprofitable." You see, if a coin is lost, it is not profitable.



When I was swimming down in West Palm Beach, Florida in the ocean, one day I looked up and my wedding ring was gone. It had slipped off while I was swimming. It went to the bottom of the ocean. Now there are some shells down there and a ring down there. My ring, on the bottom of the ocean, is worth no more than those shells, if it's on the bottom of the ocean. You see, a treasure that is lost is no treasure. A coin that is lost is unprofitable. Now you may think that you're very profitable, but I'm talking about the kingdom of Heaven. You see, our Lord is talking about the worthlessness of a man without God. God created you to know Him, love Him, and serve Him.

Now how did this coin get lost? Well, it was lost, first of all, in the darkness. Look, if you will, in Luke 15 verse 8, "Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle." You see, this coin, like every unsaved person, is in darkness and great darkness, because the God of this world had blinded their minds. And so, like a lost coin, you're in darkness.

And then this same verse of Scripture says that she not only lights a candle, but she sweeps the house. Look in verse 8. She sweeps the house. Not only was it lost in darkness; it was lost in dirt. It's down there somehow in the dirt. And so she's sweeping the house, disturbing the dirt, hoping to find the coin.

But now, listen. Not only was it lost in darkness and lost in the dirt; it was lost in disgrace. Now Jesus here speaks of ten pieces of silver. That's very interesting. He doesn't say, "Which of you, having a piece of silver, loses it." He talks of ten pieces of silver, and one is lost. Ten is the complete number. Like seven is the perfect number, but ten is the complete number. Five fingers, five fingers: ten. And so, in Bible symbolism, ten means completeness.

Now let me tell you why I said it was lost in disgrace. Back in this day, a husband would give to his wife ten pieces of silver. There would be a hole in the center with a ribbon that would go through them. The husband would engrave his name on it. And if you've seen the pictures of Middle Eastern women with these coins going across their face. I think you have. Very similar to our wedding ring today, our engagement ring. And she would wear these, and that spoke of the loyalty of her husband to her and she to him. Now if she were unfaithful, if she became an adulteress, they would take a coin right out of the center, and there would be a hideous gap there. She would be disgraced. You can understand now why she was frantically seeking this coin. You see, God loves you and He wants you to be His, but the devil wants to make you a disgrace to God.

And so, man is so weak like a lost sheep: dumb, dependent, and defenseless. Man is so worthless like a lost coin: lost in the dark, lost in the dirt, lost in disgrace. Remember, they're asking Jesus, "Why do you keep company with these people?" And Jesus said, "That's why I do it."

Now, the third thing that Jesus told was a story of a lost son. The story, remember now, lost sheep, lost silver, and now the story of a lost son. Now look, if you will, in Luke 15 verses 11 through 12, "And He said, 'A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.' And he divided unto them his living.'" Both sons got the same amount. And when this young man was saying to his father, "Father, I want my inheritance and I want it now." Now the inheritance was normally given when the father died, but this man says, "I want it, and I want it now!" It was a way of saying to his father, "I wish you were dead. I don't need you. I don't want your love. I don't want your fellowship. I don't want your authority over me. I just want what you have. I don't want you." Now, friend, there are many people just like that today. They don't want God, but they want what God has. They walk on God's green Earth; they breathe God's fresh air. They live on the abundance that God has given: the rain and



the sunshine, but they don't want God. And so, Jesus tells this story of this boy, and Jesus is going to say, "He is a wretched boy because he is away from home."

Now look, if you will, in Luke 15 verse 13, "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." Now I don't know where he went. If he lived in Memphis, maybe he went to New Orleans. Maybe he went to Las Vegas. Maybe he went to Miami. Maybe he went to Tunica. I don't know where he went, but he went to a far country. And there he wasted what his father had given him, living high, wide, and handsome, women, liquor, and song, and soon it was gone because he was spending money like it was water in his hands.

Now what happened? Well, first of all, there was **depression**. Now the Bible says a mighty famine came in that land. Look in Luke 15 verses 14 through 19, "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself," that is, when he was in his right mind, "he said, 'How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee. And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.'"

Now what is the fruit of this kind of sin? First of all, there's depression. There arose a famine in that land. That's just another word for saying depression. Now you say, "Well, I'm not in depression. I've got a lot in the bank." I want to tell you something: one of two things. Soon it will leave you, or you will leave it. There arose a depression. Don't boast about what you have, about your strength, about your friends, about your intellect. All of these things are here, but Jesus is saying there's going to be a depression.

And not only was there depression, but there was **degradation**. This boy in Luke 15 verses 14 and 15, "Having lost it all, went and joined himself to a citizen of that country," that is, a stranger somewhere else, "and he sent him out to feed the pigs, to feed the swine." Now remember, Jesus is giving this parable to the Pharisees, the high muckety-mucks of the Jewish religion, and it's a Jewish audience. This was a Jewish boy. A self-respecting Jew would not touch a pig with a ten-foot pole. And there he is slopping the hogs and wanting some of the swill that the hogs did eat. Luke 15:16, "Would fain to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." What is the story? Look at it. It is a story, ladies and gentlemen, of depression. And then it's a story of degradation. And then it's a story of **dissatisfaction**. He's hungry. He doesn't have anything to satisfy his deepest longings.

Now remember, Jesus is talking in a spiritual sense right now, and what He is saying is this: that without the Father, there is a gnawing hunger in every man's breast. Now you may be wearing a mask today. You may be laughing and going on your way, but I'll tell you this much: down in your heart, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a hunger for God. "Friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for by sin undermine; I know where 'tis found, only true pleasures in Jesus abound." Friend, if you don't know the Lord Jesus, I know that I know there is a God-shaped vacuum in your heart. And so what our Lord is talking about here is the weakness of man without God, like a sheep. The worthlessness of man, like a lost coin. The wretchedness of man away from God. He said, "You want to know why I keep company with them? That's the reason."

But now, let's turn it over and think not only of the sinful nature of man, but let's think of **the saving nature of God**. In this parable, there were three who would go out and seek that which was lost. There was



the shepherd, there was the woman, and there was the father. Now you're going to learn something about the nature of God as you look at these people. For example, the shepherd represents the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman represents the Holy Spirit. And the father represents the loving Father in Heaven.

Now, first of all, **the shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ**. The sheep is lost. The shepherd is Jesus, "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." John 10:11. Now let me tell you what the nature of Jesus is. You want to know what the nature of Jesus is? It is to seek the lost. Why did Jesus come to this Earth? He didn't come primarily as a teacher. He didn't come as a healer. He came as a Savior, do you know that? As a Savior. Luke 19:10, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." The apostle Paul said in First Timothy 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That is the nature of the Lord Jesus. And let me just put this in parenthetically. If Jesus is in your heart, you are going to want to go out after the lost. Now if you don't care about lost people, I think you'd better check up on that thing you call salvation, because the nature of Jesus is to rescue, to rescue the perishing. That is His nature. He is the seeking Savior. And so the Lord, when He told this story, spoke of a shepherd that represented Him.

Then He spoke of **a woman; that represents the Holy Spirit of God**. And not only do we see in the shepherd, the rescuing nature of God, but in the woman we see **the revealing nature of God**. What this woman did was to light a candle because this coin was lost in the darkness. That's what God the Holy Spirit wants to do in your heart this morning, to light a candle, to see the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ because, friend, without the Holy Spirit, you'll never understand. That's the reason I got on my knees this morning before I came out here, as I do every Sunday, and said, "O God Almighty, please anoint me to preach," because it's the Spirit that gives light; not a sermon, not an outline, the Holy Spirit of God. And God wants to light the candle of hope in your heart. So she lights a candle. And then she begins to sweep. The candle speaks of illumination. The broom speaks of disturbance. This is conviction. She begins to sweep and to stir up all of that filth and that dirt.

Now if God is working on you this morning, you're going to see that candle and you're going to feel that broom. Now if you don't have that, then I suggest that you wait before God till He sends it to you. You see, this coin was lost in darkness and lost in dirtiness and lost in disgrace. But, you see, there's not only the rescuing nature of God the Son, not only is there the revealing nature of God the Spirit, but there is **the receiving nature**, O listen to me, precious friend, **of God the Father**, the receiving nature of God the Father.

Now this boy is down in the pigpen, and what does he say? Read again in Luke 15 verses 17 through 22. He came to himself and said, "Why, the servants in my father's house, the servants have bread enough and to spare." They don't eat everything on their plate. "And here I am perishing with hunger. I will arise and go to my father," now listen to this, "and I will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and I'm no more, I'm no more worthy to be called thy son.'" But the Bible says, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." And he said, "'Father, I'm not worthy to be your son. Would you just make me a servant?'" "Let me bunk out with the other slaves." And the father fell on his neck and kissed him and said, "'Bring a ring and put it on his hand.'" That's a sign of sonship. "'Bring a robe and put it on him, and put shoes on his feet.'" The slaves didn't wear shoes. Here this father is receiving this boy. It's one of the most moving pictures in all of the Bible.



This father's been longing for his son. He goes to the mailbox: no mail. He asks everybody, "Have you seen my boy? Have you seen John?" Nobody's seen him. The father is sitting up there on the front porch, looking down with his keen eye down the long road that leads to the house, and he sees a figure coming. And first he is of no consequence to the old man. But then there's something about the way the boy swings his arms. There's something about his gait, the way he walks. Something about the way he swings his head. And the old man says, "That's John! That is John!" And he leaps over the balcony, the banister, and he begins to run down that road to meet that boy. What a picture of God the Father.

You know, in the Bible, God moves with deliberate majesty. In every other place when you read about God the Father, He is never late, He's never in a hurry, and we're told to wait on God. But here's a picture of God in a hurry. I see that old man as he gathers up his robes and runs and runs to meet that boy coming home.

I'm telling you, this morning I'm going to give an invitation. And if you'll step out in faith, God will run up to receive you. He loves you. Friend, Jesus said, "You want me to tell you why I keep company with sinners? They're weak like a sheep. They're worthless like a lost coin. They're wretched like a lost son. That's the nature of sinful man. But let me tell you the nature of Almighty God. There's the rescuing nature of God the Son. There is the revealing nature of God the Spirit. There is the receiving nature of God the loving Father.

I don't believe I've ever preached on this passage, but what I tell the following story. I've told you before many, many years ago. I don't know where the story first originated. But a preacher, an old preacher was riding on a train. And he looked across the aisle and he saw a young boy. And the preacher, knowing the ways of man and having counseled many people, he could see the boy was in trouble. He could see he was fidgety and nervous, so he went over and sat by him and said, "Son, I'm a minister of the Gospel, and I don't want to pry, but do you have a problem? May I, perhaps I can help you." The boy said, "Yes, sir, I do have a problem." He said, "Let me tell you. Many years ago, I had a fight with my parents. My parents are good and decent people. I was wicked and ungrateful, and I left home and slammed the door behind me and looked back and said, 'I will never come back to this house again.'" He said, "I've lived apart from my loving parents."

And he said, "I have received word now that my daddy is sick. And I thought how hurtful and hateful and sinful I've been. Would I let my daddy die without my apology to him, without asking his forgiveness?" And so he said, "I'm on this train. These tracks run close to my house, and we're almost there. There's a curve in the track, and out by the track, behind my parents' house is a tree, a large tree. And I told them I would be on this train. And I told them if they would let me come home, to tie a handkerchief on that tree. But if I didn't see the handkerchief, I would know I was not worthy to come home and I would just keep riding."

And he said, "Now we're very close." The preacher said, "Son, you pray and I'll look." And the old preacher in his heart said, "O God, let there be a handkerchief on that tree." The train came around the curve. He said, "Son, lift up your head and look." And that old couple had gone out there and gotten every towel, every bed sheet, every quilt, everything that they could find that was white, and that tree looked like a mountain of snow. "Come home. Come home."

I want to tell you, God loves you! The Good Shepherd is seeking you. The Holy Spirit is shining light on you. And God the Father has His arms open wide.

I want you to bow your head in prayer. If you've been away from God, you need the Lord, I want you to let God speak to your heart. In a way, I want you to forget what I've said and I want you to listen to what God



is saying, because God is telling you to come home. While heads are bowed, and your eyes closed, my dear friend, I want to lead you in a prayer. And if you realize how much God loves you and will receive you, I want you to pray this prayer after me, "Dear God, thank You for the Holy Spirit who reveals my sin, disturbs my heart, puts me under conviction. Thank You for the dear Savior who died and gave His life for the sheep and shed His blood that I might be saved. Thank You, God, that You love me and You will not turn me away, for You've said in Your Word, 'Whosoever will may come.'" Now pray this, friend, if you can pray it and mean it, "Dear God, I open my heart. I receive You. I come to You, now. I'm coming home. Save me, Lord Jesus. In Your holy name I pray, Amen."



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