

# Heaven's Lost & Found

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[ 0 : 00 ] Go ahead and take your Bibles this morning and open them to Luke.

! Luke chapter 15. We're finally going to get back to our study of Luke, my preaching through this gospel, the gospel of Luke, a very long book, really long.

In fact, really, I think I've mentioned this when it comes down to who wrote most of the New Testament. As far as text, it was Luke.

Luke wrote the gospel of Luke, which is a very long gospel, longest gospel. And he wrote the book of Acts. And so we often think of Paul as the one who wrote most of the New Testament.

He certainly wrote most of the books of the New Testament, including Hebrews. I can say that because Tom's not here. But actually, in terms of words, Luke wrote the most.

[ 1 : 09 ] So it's taking us a while to get through Luke, especially when you take quite a lengthy hiatus from it through the holidays and such. But now we're ready to get back to it.

And we're ready to start up with chapter 15. As a matter of fact, we're going to take the entire chapter over the next two Sundays, counting this one.

And so, with that said, I want to go ahead and read the entire chapter of Luke 15, that entire chapter. So it's lengthy, but I want to get it all together here this morning.

And I'll do the same next Sunday, too. All right? Chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke. Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to him to hear him.

And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them. So he spoke this parable to them, saying, 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?

[ 2 : 24 ] And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulder. Let me get closer to my glasses here. Do you have that problem, any of you?

I don't know. Somehow my glasses are a little cloudy with those lights here this morning, so bear with me. Now, since I looked up at the lights, now I have this big bright dot right on my page. It'll make it even harder.

All right, so when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

Or what woman, so here's a second parable, 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?

[ 3 : 28 ] And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors to gather, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost. Likewise I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Then he said, A certain man had two sons. So you know now we have a third parable. 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, that is, his two sons. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeying to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

That's how it's translated in the New King James. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed the swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one

gave him anything.

[ 4 : 43 ] But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am no longer, I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

Make me like one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father, but when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight and am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, and bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.

For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found, and they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard the music and dancing.

So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.

[ 6 : 09 ] But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years I have been serving you.

I never transgressed your commandment at any time, and yet you never gave me a young goat that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, he was devoured, has devoured your livelihood with harlots.

You killed the fatted calf for him. And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.

All right, so long chapter. A lot of reading. But a tremendous chapter. And I have decided to read this morning the entire 15th chapter of the Gospel of Luke because this entire chapter comprises a single unit of Scripture.

We don't have different things going on here. We don't have a couple of parables and then another parable that means something else. All these go together. And so Jesus tells three parables in this chapter, and they all go together.

[ 7 : 32 ] The first two, I think you would admit, are simple with very few details, right? I mean, all you have, you have a shepherd with a hundred sheep. He loses one. He leaves the ninety-nine in search of the one.

And when he finds it, there's a great celebration, pretty simple parable. And then you have the woman who has ten coins, and she loses one. And so she sweeps the house in search of the one coin.

And when she finds the one coin, she then has a great celebration. So two very simple parables. And the details are quite simple. And there are a few details to them.

But then you would have to admit that the third parable is different. It's much more complex. It has many, many more details. And yet, I would say to you that the basic details are the same.

You have a father who has two sons. And he loses one. And he, as it were, is sitting on his porch, constantly searching and longing and watching for his son to return.

[ 8 : 34 ] And then when he finds him, finds his son, there's a great celebration. So basically the same elements in all three of the parables. And then each parable's conclusion is very similar.

The shepherd says there in verse 6, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. And then the woman says in verse 9, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece or the coin which is lost.

And then the father says in verse 32, he's saying it to his older son, It was right that we should make merry and be glad for your brother was dead and now he is alive or alive again.

He was lost and now he is found. So same kind of conclusion. Rejoice the lost sheep has been found. Rejoice the lost coin has been found.

Rejoice because the lost son has been found. And even Jesus' applications at the end of each of these parables, the third one is implied, but each of the conclusions are similar.

[ 9 : 47 ] More joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. That's the conclusion, really, that is to be drawn from each of the three parables. Now, with all that in mind, let me say something else by way of introduction.

Jesus weaves together in these three parables two purposes. Two purposes.

Or we could say two points. Jesus makes two points. And these points are woven into each of the three parables.

And so each point that Jesus desires to make in these three parables, each point, each of the two points, are connected to the audience, to his audience, to specific segments of his audience.

And we need to understand this before we really get into the parables themselves. And so I would just have you notice that one point he is connecting to or is directed toward the tax collectors and the sinners.

[ 10 : 59 ] The other point that we're going to see in this text, in this entire chapter, is connected with or directed toward the Pharisees and the scribes.

You have those two segments of people, groups of people, in the audience here when Jesus is speaking. And both groups are not only introduced at the beginning of the chapter, but both groups are represented in each of the parables.

For example, the ninety-nine sheep, the nine coins, the older brother, these represent who? The Pharisees and the scribes.

And then the one sheep that is found, the one coin that is found, the one son who is found, these represent the tax collectors and the sinners.

And so Jesus has a message, really, for both groups of people, directed toward both groups of people. All right, so then we will focus this morning on Jesus' message that is connected with the tax collectors and the sinners.

[ 12 : 10 ] And then next Sunday, when we really spend a whole lot more time in that third parable, though this point is made in all three parables, we shall take up Jesus' message that is connected to the Pharisees and the scribes.

All right? All right, so let's see then this morning what really I would suggest is Jesus' main point. main point in this entire chapter, in all three parables.

And so let's consider what I have kind of entitled this message, Heavens Lost and Found. Heavens Lost and Found. Now, the very first thing we see in this chapter, the very first thing that Luke reveals to us, is what I would call a sinner responding.

That's number one. A sinner responding, or in this case, sinners responding to Jesus. Responding to Jesus. That's the first thing that Luke reveals to us in this chapter.

Look at it. Verse 1. Right there in verse 1. Then all the tax collectors and the sinners, rather, drew near to him to hear him.

[ 13 : 26 ] That's, that's this first group. The tax collectors and sinners. That's the first thing that Luke reveals to us.

Now listen, I would tell you that you could not find a more corrupt and sinful collection of people than those represented by tax collectors and sinners.

These people are openly sinful. I mean, there's no, no pretense about them. There's no facade of religion associated with, with this group of people.

There's no religious charade going on in their lives. They are openly sinful people. I mean, the very first group, tax collectors. You do understand something about tax collectors in Jesus' day, don't you?

Tax collectors were perhaps the most despised and hated group of people in all of Jewish society of that day. Tax collectors were Jews, right?

[ 14 : 30 ] They were Jews and what was their job? To collect taxes, right? That's why he called them tax collectors. They collect taxes from whom? From their countrymen, from their fellow Jews.

And, and so these Jews, these tax collectors were working for the, the Romans. They were working for them, the occupying country there in Israel.

And they themselves were greatly despised by the Jews. And so these tax collectors, these Jews, they would set up booths in the markets and in the, you know, the harbor areas and where there would be ships coming and going and export and import.

And they would set up booths at the major border crossings around the nation. And they would collect Roman taxes from their fellow countrymen, the Jews.

And they would, of course, you know, would charge excessive amounts of taxes. Large amounts of money. As much as they could get. And they had the authority to get as much as they wanted. [15:45] And they would collect those taxes and much of that money would go into their own pockets. And then they would also give the rest of it to what the Romans required. And so the Romans required a certain amount of taxes.

And then anything that these tax collectors could extort from their fellow countrymen, anything over and above what the Romans required, was just cream.

You know, it was just for them. And they could collect as much as they wanted. And this was understood and it was even allowed by the Roman government and gave these tax collectors great power.

As a matter of fact, the Romans even provided a kind of local or private militia for the tax collectors. You don't just have the idea that there's this, you know, this one sole guy sitting at the booth and then, you know, the people just do whatever he says.

He had some Roman soldiers that were assigned to him that he could use in order to collect these taxes and put people into prison and to punish people if they did not pay their taxes.

[16:50] And so, you know, it's pretty easy to see. They were despised. And they were despicable people. And they were thieves. And they were corrupt to their very core.

And they were the ones who had drawn near to Jesus to hear him. That's what we need to see here. It's amazing. And then what about the other group, the second group, the sinners?

That seems kind of like a carte blanche kind of group or word to describe a group. Sinners. Just sinners. Well, these sinners that Luke mentions here were different than the tax collectors.

The tax collectors were corrupt. They were dishonest. But the sinners were immoral, grossly immoral people. We're talking here about harlots and drunkards and thieves and idolaters and those who were involved in and participated in the pagan temple worship and so which involved gross sexual immorality as a part of their worship.

And these people were involved in that kind of thing. And these were the ones also who had drawn near to Jesus to hear him. Are you getting the picture? This is incredible.

[18:08] Despised tax collectors, disgusting, immoral, perverted sinners. Can you identify with them?

Your first response would be, no, no way. And yet we are supposed to identify with them here. We are to identify with them.

Now listen to me and listen very carefully. These are the only kinds of people who can respond to the Savior. Open sinners, admitted sinners, admitted sinners, gross sinners.

You say, well, I'm not a gross sinner. Well, you have the potential in your heart. The same potential for sin that existed with these, quote, tax collectors and sinners exists in every one of us.

We're supposed to identify with it. And here's how. It is not good people who draw near to Jesus to hear Him. It's not good people.

[19:24] It's sinners just like you, just like me. And by the way, did you notice what the so-called good people were doing?

Verse 2, the Pharisees and scribes complained. They were murmuring. They were critical. They were hateful. And this is why Jesus told these three parables, by the way.

And His point is crystal clear in the very first parable. Look at it again in verse 4. 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?

And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices and when he comes home, he calls to gather his friends and neighbors saying to them, Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost.

What a picture of salvation. It's crystal clear. The lost sheep, that's the sinner, is pursued by the shepherd, that's the Savior, and when he is found, that is, when he repents and is saved, the shepherd rejoices and his whole household rejoices.

[20:47] That's heaven. That's heaven. And the identical picture appears really in the parables of the lost coin and also in the parable of the lost son or what we know as the prodigal son.

But now look again at Jesus' application of this first parable. Verse 7, I say to you, you here is specifically the Pharisees and the scribes because he's the one who he is addressing, the ones.

He says, I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 just persons who need no repentance.

Now don't misinterpret what Jesus is saying there about the 99. He's not talking about certain people who don't need to repent because they are righteous already.

He's not talking about that. The Bible clearly says in Romans chapter 3 there is none righteous, no not one. There is none who does good, no not one.

[ 21 : 52 ] So what is Jesus talking about here? Well, the 99 sheep in the first parable, the 9 coins in the second parable, the second son or the elder son in the third parable, they represent the Pharisees and the scribes as I have said.

And they don't need repentance. You say they don't? No, they don't in this sense. They don't need repentance because it has not even entered their minds that they need it.

They don't need it. Why? Because they don't believe themselves to be sinners. sinners. That's the Pharisees and the scribes. They're so hardened in their hearts, in their own self-righteousness that they don't have any inclination of repentance.

Indeed, they have no ability to repent. And so, heaven does not rejoice over these self-righteous sinners. Only over the openly, admittedly, repentant sinners who draw near to Jesus to hear Him.

Now listen to me and listen very carefully. This church is not for good people. You understand?

[ 23 : 21 ] This church is not open to good people. Good people need not apply for membership here.

Getting awfully quiet in here. This church is open only to sinners who draw near to Jesus to hear Him.

And that's good news, isn't it? because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. So, first of all, a sinner responding.

Second, a Savior receiving. This is great. A Savior receiving.

I think it's ironic that the best news ever was spoken by a bunch of grumbling, critical, self-consumed, self-righteous Pharisees and scribes.

[ 24 : 37 ] Really? Verse 2, all the Pharisees and scribes complained and listened to what they said. this man, they wouldn't even say his name, this man receives sinners.

They didn't even know what they had said. They didn't know what they said. The greatest truth ever, ever revealed by God, the greatest or best news ever proclaimed a man is Jesus receives sinners.

Amen? He receives them. Sinners, just like you and just like me. See, listen, this is what sinners can expect when they draw near to hear Jesus.

They will be received by him. That's great news. Great news. I like what the Father in the third parable said in verse 32.

And it was right. He said, it's right that we should make merry and be glad. Why? For your brother was dead. He was dead to us. And he is alive.

[ 25 : 49 ] He's now alive again. He was lost and is found. That is wonderful.

This is the amazing thing about what is involved when Jesus receives sinners. sinners. This is the amazing thing. Jesus receives sinners because first of all, he's searching for them.

You get this from the parables? He's searching for them. And Jesus is searching for them. Why? Because they're lost.

And they need to be found. If this were not true, none of us would be saved.

None of us would be found. Notice the shepherd went out in search of the one lost sheep, not the other way around. The woman went about searching for the one lost coin.

[ 26 : 57 ] The father was constantly searching, yearning for his one lost son. And this is what our savior has done for us.

Have you ever lost something that was precious to you, valuable to you, and then later found it?

Have you ever had that happen? I mean, all of us have lost things and we've never found them.

Have you ever lost something that was just really, really precious, really valuable, and later found it? Sherry was relating this story to someone I remember in the last several weeks.

Several years ago, I don't know how many years ago now, Sherry lost her wedding ring. That's pretty precious, pretty valuable. Well, I don't know, some wedding rings are more valuable than hers, I'll have to admit, but that's another story.

But she lost it. She was, it was around the holiday, it was Thanksgiving, or Thanksgiving, we were going to visit with my, spend the holidays with my parents, and my dad loves molasses cookies. [ 28 : 02 ] I hate them, but he loves them. And so, Sherry, before we left to travel to be with them for the Thanksgiving holiday, she was making molasses cookies.

And so, she's in there baking in the kitchen and so forth, and then after she had cleaned up everything, her ring was missing. Gone. And so, scouring the house, looking around the house, and finally concluded that accidentally she had thrown it in the trash.

You know, that happens sometimes. Well, the trash had already been taken out, and the big trash truck had just picked it all up. And so, we get in the car, and we're looking for the trash truck.

Driving around, not because we think we can get inside the trash truck, but we're going to follow it to the dump. And then, I guess, the idea is to go through all of the bags and trash and junk and such, and of course, you know, for one thing, we don't know which trash truck it is.

Well, short story, we decided to just give that up, and because we had to get on the road and go see my parents for Thanksgiving holiday, and cookies had been made, they had to be delivered.

[ 29 : 21 ] Well, I don't know, several months later, Christmas, all right, Thanksgiving Christmas, I've got to be coached by my wife on these stories. If it were just up to me, I would greatly embellish the story, you know, that's what preachers do.

Well, Christmas, she's baking again, and gets out the cookbook, and there's the ring inside the book. She'd taken it off, you know, do the baking, laid it there, closed it up later, and sitting up there the whole time.

Lost and found. Something precious to its owner. Something greatly valued by its owner, something irreplaceable, really.

I mean, you can buy another ring, but it can never be like that one. You see, I was lost. I was lost. Jesus seeks the lost. Do you understand that? He seeks the lost. We put a lot of emphasis on the sinner seeking the Savior, and we forget all about the fact that the Savior is seeking the sinner.

[ 30 : 40 ] And if it were not for that, the sinner would never be saved. He seeks the lost. In fact, Jesus came into the world for that express purpose.

The Bible says he came to seek and to save that which is lost. Praise the Lord. And here's the point. Before these tax collectors and sinners drew near to hear him, Jesus was already seeking them.

The lost sheep did not seek the shepherd. The sheep deliberately strayed from the shepherd, and if you know anything about sheep, they don't have any capacity to return to the shepherd.

And the lost coin did not seek its owner. Coins have no ability to seek their owners. And the lost son, even, in this parable, did not first seek the father.

He first came to himself. He came to himself. God opened his eyes to his true condition, and only then did he desire to return to the father.

[ 31 : 43 ] Romans 3, 1 makes it clear and plain. There is none that seek after God. The truth is, if you are here this morning, I'm speaking to a specific person here.

I don't know who you are. But if you're here this morning and you're not saved, if you're here this morning and you're searching for Jesus, your search is over.

Your search is over. It was over a long time ago. There's no need to search for Jesus. He's not lost. You are. You're the lost one, and Jesus does not say to you, seek.

He says, repent. Repent. Draw near and hear me. John 6, 37. All that the father gives me will come to me.

You can bank on that. And the one who comes to me, I will by no means, no means cast out. He receives sinners.

[ 32 : 52 ] Praise the Lord. A sinner responding. The sinners drew near to hear him. A savior receiving. This man receives sinners.

And then one more. A sovereign rejoicing. A sovereign rejoicing. And we see this in each of the three parables.

And by the way, if you haven't already seen this or understood this, the shepherd in the first parable, the woman in the second, and the father in the third, all three of those represent the Lord. They represent the sovereign God of the universe. And so the shepherd rejoices when he finds his lost sheep, doesn't he? That stupid little sheep.

I mean, he's always getting away. Wandering. I mean, I've got 99. There's just one. I think I can do without the one. Just keep my 99.

[ 34 : 00 ] Is that what he said? That how he felt? No. He risked all to find the one. And what about our sovereign God?

Jesus said, I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one, one sinner who repents.

Jesus. And then the woman rejoices when she finds her lost coin. That crazy coin. That dumb coin. It made me clean the house out to find it.

I mean, it's what a hassle. I think I think I sure I'm sure it was not worth it just to find one coin. Is that how she felt? No. Now, we might feel that way.

She didn't feel that way at all. Well, what about the sovereign God of the universe? Well, Jesus said, likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.

[ 35 : 09 ] Who repents? And what about the father of the prodigal son? I mean, the son comes to his father and he wants his inheritance. He demands it. Give him my inheritance now.

And the father gives it to him and he's gone. And then he takes his inheritance and he spends it all in reckless and immoral living. And when he returns to the father, the father throws a big party.

That just doesn't make any sense to us. Verse 22. The father said to his servant, bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put on the ring on his hand and sandals on his feet and bring the fatted calf here right now and kill it and let us eat and be merry for this my son was dead and he's alive again. He was lost and he's found. He didn't kick the son out on his rear. He didn't say, you know, send him away in shame. He didn't scold the son.

He didn't humiliate the son before his other son or before his servants. He didn't do any of that. I mean, put yourself in the shoes or the sandals of the prodigal son.

[ 36 : 21 ] I mean, what a wasted life. I mean, the rebellion of it all. And his, the parties and the liquor and the harlots and all of that and he comes back to the father really expecting to be rejected.

That's what we ought to understand here. In fact, I think it's implied that he thought long and hard before he even returned home thinking that I have no open door there.

Expecting to be rejected at the very most maybe that the father would grant him a place as one of his hired servants. You know, hoping that might be the case.

But when he returns to the father, no condemnation. No condemnation. Just celebration. celebration. This is great news. Because there are sinners. Maybe some here. And you're thinking, I can't come to Jesus.

[ 37 : 37 ] Why would he forgive me? Look what I have done. Did you know that God is more willing to forgive you than you are willing to ask him to forgive?

Far more willing. That God is far more willing to be gracious to you than you are to repent.

That's our father. What did Jesus say? He said there is more joy in heaven. Is that possible? To have degrees of joy in heaven?

I mean, think about it. Can you imagine that heaven would be anything other than absolute constant joy? And yet Jesus said there are certain times when there is more joy in heaven than other times.

He's saying that joy reaches its absolute climax. When a lost sheep is found. A lost, rebelling, wandering sinner is found more joy in heaven.

[ 39 : 01 ] You don't have to shrink back from the gospel. You don't have to sit there and think that I just don't think it'll work for me.

You don't have to feel ashamed by your sin to the point that you will not draw near to Jesus. You don't have to expect any reprimand from him, scolding from him, any question.

You know, I'll think about it a while before I save you. You'd be nothing but trouble to me. You don't have to think that. He is willing to forgive.

Infinitely more than you are willing to ask. So ask him. And there will be a great celebration. Did you know that there was a celebration in heaven when you were saved?

Those of you who are saved, a celebration. That's what Jesus said. A celebration for you. When you were saved. And guess who led the party, led the celebration?

[ 40 : 19 ] God did. And all the angels joined in. And for perhaps someone here this morning.

If you will. Repent. Draw near. And trust Jesus.

Hear him. Then God will lead such a celebration. Such a celebration.

All the angels of heaven. There will be more joy in heaven. Over one son.  
Who repents. Thank you.