

Stories Jesus Told

It's Party Time!!!

Luke 15:7

February 20, 2021

The Context:

Tax Collectors and other *"sinners"* wanted to be around Jesus and listen to what He had to say. Pharisees and Teachers of the Law also gathered around Jesus, but for a very different reason – He was dangerous. On one particular occasion, Jesus, Tax Collectors, other run-of-the-mill sinners and the religious elite, were all together in one place and the *"elites"* began to complain, *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*

I mean, seriously, any good, self-respecting church leader would never be caught dead with that particular class of people. The *"righteous"* and sinners must never mingle!

Jesus, on the other hand, never seemed to mind. In fact, hanging out with sinners, rather than saints, was exactly what He wanted to do and now was the perfect time to tell a few stories:

The Parable {Luke 15:4-32}:

Suppose one of you has a 100 sheep and you lose 1 of them. Don't you leave the 99 and go after the lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, don't you joyfully put the sheep on your shoulders and go home and call all your neighbors and invite them to a party because you found that 1 lost sheep? It's like that in heaven and there is more rejoicing over 1 sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who don't need to repent.

Or suppose a woman has 10 silver coins and loses 1. Doesn't she search the house carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, doesn't she call her friends and neighbors and invite them to a party because the lost had been found? It's like that in heaven. There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over 1 sinner who repents.

A man had 2 sons. The younger son asked for his inheritance and not long after he put everything he had in a suitcase, moved to a distant country and proceeded to spend all his inheritance on wild living. He spent every last dime and then a severe drought came to the country --- the young man was in trouble. He was forced to get a job looking after pigs. He was hungry all the time and the food the pigs were eating began to look good, but no one was willing to help him. One day he finally came to his senses, "How many of my father's employees have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I'm going home. It's time to admit that I have sinned. I realize that I am not worthy to be called his son, but maybe he'll agree to take me on as an employee." So, he got up and started the long journey home. He was still a long way from home, but his father, pacing at the end of the driveway, saw him and was filled with compassion. He hiked up his robes and ran toward his son and wrapped his arms around him in a long embrace. "Father", he said, "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am not worthy to be called your son." But his father didn't let him finish. Turning to a servant, the father said, "Quick! Bring the best robe I have and put it on him and bring my signet ring and some sandals as well. Prepare my best veal because I'm throwing a party!! My son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. PARTY!! Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came home, he heard music and dancing. He asked one of the servants what was going on and was told a party was being given for the brother who had returned home. This news angered him and he refused to join in the celebration. His father even went out to try and convince him to come in, but he answered his father, "All these years I've been slaving away for you. I have never disobeyed you and you never through a party for me! But when your son, the one who threw away your money on prostitutes, comes home, you throw a party for him" "My son," replied the father, "You are my devoted son and everything I own belongs to you, and we had to celebrate because your brother, who was dead, is alive again. He was lost and has been found."

The Lessons:

I'm going to tell you something about my mother..... She is directionally challenged. There's no shame in it ---- lots of people are. As a small child I'd sit on the arm rest of the front seat of the car and give her directions. {turn left up here, etc.}

The first major argument my husband and I got into was over the necessity of using a map --- Him, yes. Me, no.

I'm pretty good at finding my way around and rarely consider myself "lost" -- I'm just not exactly where I want to be.

These stories, however, are not about physical lostness. They are about spiritual lostness.

How does a person get spiritually lost?

- Stubbornness, pride or rebellion.
- Detours and shortcuts.
- Laziness.
- Spiritual ADHD.
- Comfort at the expense of obedience.
- Resistance to surrender and the relinquishing control.
- Wounds inflicted by other people

The Lost Sheep:

Some, like the Lost Sheep, know they're lost, but they don't know how to find their way home. The detours and shortcuts have not worked. They're helpless and they know it and they will remain lost unless someone comes looking for them and that's what Jesus does and He doesn't stop searching until he finds them.

The Lost Coin:

Some, like the Lost Coin, don't know they're lost, but they're just as lost as the Lost Sheep. How can that be?

It's possible to be lost sitting in a pew. It's possible to love "churchy things" but not love God. It's possible to be self-righteous, but not actually be righteous. It's possible to be lost and not even know it. We will examine this further momentarily.

If a person is oblivious to their lostness, how are they supposed to get found? Someone has to go in search of them and that's what Jesus does and He doesn't stop searching until he finds them.

The Lost Son:

Some, like the Lost Son, get intentionally lost. They have experienced the love of the father, but now they want to take a different path. They like the freedom of the road.

Jesus does not go in search of them -- He allows them their choice. But every day He goes to the end of the driveway, scanning the horizon, hoping that today will be the day they choose to come home.

Finding a lost person is only a part of the process:

- The Lost Sheep knows he's lost, what he has to admit is that he needs help to become UN-lost = **Repentance.**
The Lost Sheep always has the choice of refusing the help of the rescue party --- *"Thanks, I'm fine. I can find my own way home"* However, if he does that, he will remain lost.
- The Lost Coin does not know he's lost. For all he knows he's on the scenic by-way of life and does not realize that there's a cliff at the end of the road. In order for the rescuer to help the Lost Coin, he also has to admit that he's lost = **Repentance.**
The Lost Coin always has the choice of not admitting he's lost, *"Thanks, I'm fine. I'm not lost, I'm just not exactly where I want to be.... Yet."* However, if he does that, he will remain lost and will eventually come to the cliff at the end of the road.
- The Lost Son got lost on purpose. He intentionally took the road that looked easy and smooth, but it has not turned out as he had planned and as he looks back, he sees all the potholes and danger signs he had chosen to ignore. If he's going to be rescued, he is going to have to go back the way he came. In order to that he will have to admit that he is responsible for the situation he finds himself in = **Repentance.**
The Lost Son always has the choice to ignore his lostness and press on, *"Thanks, I'm fine. If I can just get to the smooth road ahead, things will work out."* However, if he does that, he will remain lost on the road he has chosen.

Rescue begins with repentance.

John Eldredge {Epic pg. 64} – The challenge God faces is rescuing a people who have no idea how captive they are; no real idea how desperate they are.

When Jesus brings the Lost Sheep home - **THERE IS A PARTY!**

When Jesus finds the Lost Coin - **THERE IS A PARTY!**

When Lost Son finally comes home – Jesus hikes up His robes and runs to meet him. It doesn't matter what he's done – he's home and – **THERE IS A PARTY!**

The Lost Brother – not knowing your lost:

I'm like the brother of the prodigal
Who turned his nose and puffed his chest
He didn't run off like his brother
But his soul was just as dead – **"Start Right Here"** Casting Crowns

The fact is you don't have to run away to be lost. You don't have to cause a scandal to be in rebellion.

The older brother served the father, but not because he loved and the father. He might have actually looked on with envy as the younger brother did what he **WANTED** to do, but instead, he stayed home out of a sense of duty and the belief that the father would **"owe"** for being the good son.

The problem here is motivation. It's not **THAT** the older brother stayed home and didn't get in trouble, it's **WHY** he stayed home. Just like the laborers who worked all day, he believed his good works entitled him to his father's estate --- his father would **"owe"** him for all his years of service.

What is your motivation for serving God? Reward or Love? Do you rejoice when a lost sheep, coin or son is rescued or are you jealous because they will receive the same reward that you have been working so hard buy?

- **Ephesians 2:8-9** - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God --⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

That brings us to the most important character in the 3 stories

The Shepherd – The Woman – The Father:

Love like that is the heart of the Gospel. Its why God sent the Son

- **1 John 4:9-10** - This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

God loves lost people: Maybe you're a lost sheep, or a lost coin, or a lost son – It doesn't matter. He is so excited that you've been found that He doesn't even care how you got lost.

"Rejoice with me! My sheep ... my coin ... my child was lost, but now they are found – PARTY!!"