

AF A9 BIBLE STUDY: “Lost & found: sheep, coin and son” Luke 15

Scripture of Lesson: Luke’s Gospel 15: 1-31

1. *Lost sheep that bleats to be found—“I am lost, I am lost!”*

- a. How it got lost: It somehow strayed from the flock. The lost sheep knows it is lost and bleats to be found although it does not know how to get back to the fold.
- b. How it was found: The shepherd set out in search of the lost one while leaving 99 in the care of another [v. 4]. This speaks of God sending out His servants in search of lost souls who might respond to the call of the gospel.
- c. Celebration: The shepherd brings the found sheep on his shoulder, announces the finding and calls for rejoicing together with his friends and neighbors [v. 5-6].
- d. Significance: The lost sheep in this parable are like children of God who have gone astray. All humanity are God’s creation and possession. This parable, thus, speaks of God’s grace that reaches out to all people who know they are lost away from God’s grace and love. There is more joy in heaven for one lost sinner who repents than 99 with no need for repentance [v. 7].

To the hypocritical Pharisees and Scribes, Lord Jesus is asking, “Do you not have the heart of God that sees the lost sheep and searches them out so that they are brought into His heavenly family?” “Do you not realize that you are also lost sheep? Where is your crying out to God instead of criticisms and hatred toward the Son of God?”

The ratio of 99 to 1 may point to the percentage of the people with honesty toward God. Perhaps 1% of the humanity only has the honesty to recognize they are lost from God and come to repentance and be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

2. *Lost coin with no sense of lostness—“I don’t know where I am but it is dark here.”*

- a. What it is and how it got lost: A ‘silver’ coin is made with care from the precious metal ore of silver, which signifies the work of God’s creation. Out of ten silver coins that a woman has as her possession, one gets lost in the mire, dust and darkness. The process of how it got lost is not known. And the silver coin is not aware of its lost state. It just lays in its lost condition in darkness unable to make its lost state known to the owner.
- b. How it was found: The owner knows she lost this one coin and lights a candle in search for it. She looks here and there, particularly in the dark corners of her house by sweeping away dirt and filth while looking carefully and finds the lost coin [v. 8]. Sometimes God uses certain forceful means to look for the lost souls such as natural disasters and wars. Like the way a lost coin responds to the light of the candle in the darkness, lost souls respond to God’s call while immersed in the darkness of life’s experiences.
- c. Celebration: As in the case of the lost and found sheep, the woman calls her friends and neighbors to share her joy of finding the lost silver coin. There is celebration in heaven on account of a soul, who was not aware he/she had been lost but is now found and brought into the fellowship with the other nine silver coins.

The ratio of ten to one may refer to the lost people of Israel who used to be in God’s grace but have fallen out of His fellowship and remained in darkness. God has not forgotten them and has used some strong measures like wars and persecution to bring them into His grace. All Jews who do not know the fellowship of God and Christ who respond to the gospel of Christ with true honesty are like this lost and found coin.

3. *Lost son—“I have sinned to my father and to God”*

- a. How the son got lost: The younger son left his father’s house with his share of inheritance and went to a “far” country, indicating the people of Israel who demanded and took their self-governance from God through their own kings, and went whoring after foreign gods. Their once mighty power and great wealth

while under God's blessings were soon depleted and they met disasters. They became captives in a 'far' country of Babylon.

- b. How he came back to his father's house: The son came to stark realization of his error and decided to return to his father's home with a repentant heart. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you [v. 18]". "And I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants [v. 19]." But his father has been waiting for the son's return:

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. [Luke 15: 20]

This shows God's yearning for the humanity's return to His home and His compassion toward the repenting souls.

- c. Welcome and celebration: After the son expressed his repentance clearly before his father and his household, the father sowed his grace and love as follows:
- i. Justification: He had the son put on the best robe that befits an heir of the household, not as a hungry, starving pig herdsman. The repentant son's status is elevated with heavenly honor. His status as a son has been restored [v. 22].
 - ii. Seal of honor: The father gives a ring to the restored son as a symbol of heirship, a seal of honor as a child of his household, and of the position of honor and privileges due only to a son. God grants the gift of Holy Spirit as the seal of His promise for eternal salvation once we have been accepted into His realm of grace and salvation:
In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. [Ephesians 1: 13-14]
And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [Ephesians 4: 30]
 - iii. Celebration: Then, there is a great feast of merry celebration with a fattened calf butchered for this purpose. Again, when a spiritually dead soul comes home to God in true repentance, there is a great joy and celebration in heaven.

4. Where are we before God?

- a. Are you in a lost state or have you been found and brought into God's great family? If lost, come to God with a true repentant spirit. God's mercy and compassion are waiting for you. And unimaginable honor and rejoicing await you.
- b. How were the sheep, the silver coin and the prodigal son found or welcomed? It takes sacrificial ministry, where the servants of God reach out to lost souls and bring them to God's fold. Let us pray for the missionaries, especially those in third world countries, in persecuted areas and in endangered areas. Let us also support them financially and through other means.
- c. If you have already been found and are a child of God, let us avoid the wrong spirit of the elder son who did not welcome his prodigal brother. All Christians should show love and compassion to the Jewish people who come back to Jesus by extending true brotherly welcome and help in all possible ways. In addition, let us not judge people who come to Jesus based on their past life or current conditions.

Topics of Discussion:

1. Which of these three parables is applicable to your experience of being found? Please share them.
2. How do we identify lost souls around us and what can we do to bring them to Christ?