

# Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,  
day after day, and that the people of God  
were filled with joy!

## Friday – Please read Luke 15:11-16 – The Lost Son.

We are only going to be able to begin our meditation of this wonderful parable today, but a word of caution as we do so. As with all well-known parables in the Bible, it is easy to assume that we know all that there is to know about the parable before we begin. Let's not do that. Let's take care to ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes so that we might have a fuller understanding of what Jesus is teaching us afresh here.

While this parable focuses primarily about on one man, the son who is lost, there are actually two sons and a father, and while we will spend the most time looking at the son who is lost, we must keep in mind that this parable is ultimately about the love of the son's father.

Before looking at what this son does, let's first address the question of who he is. Well, there are three possibilities, aren't there? He could be a believer who, because of his actions, backslides. He could be a totally unregenerate man who has absolutely no connection to God. Or he could be an unregenerate man who has covenantal privileges in his life, in other words, he is someone who has been raised in a godly home. In fact, this is who he is.

This son, the younger son, comes to his father and asks his father to give him his inheritance. On the face of it, it seems like a reasonable request. After all, many parents are now giving their children either a portion or all of their inheritance before they die, so as to help them pay off college debts, buy a home, or for some other major expenditure. But that's not the case here. What this son is saying is, 'give me what is mine', and by implication he is saying to his father, 'you might as well be dead as far as I am concerned.' So, this is a very serious breach in this young man's relationship with his father, and it's initiated by the young man.

That's where many in our nation are today. God has blessed them with living in a land where His Word is being faithfully preached, albeit not as much as we would desire. And so, there are still numerous opportunities for them to be exposed to the light of God through his Bride. Yet they will not have it; they want all they can get of God's material blessing upon their lives, but they want nothing to do with God Himself.

- Q1. Who is this young man in terms of the privileges he has had?  
Q2. What is he effectively saying to his father?

## Thursday – Please read Luke 15:8-10 – The Lost Coin.

Yesterday, we read of the love of the Lord Jesus in seeking out the lost; today we read of the work of the Holy Spirit in seeking by his regenerating and renewing power in this parable of the lost coin.

The woman has lost a coin, one of ten we are told. But this isn't just one of any ten coins; this is one of the precious coins in her wedding head-dress and is therefore of great value to her. Something of immense significance to her because it was much more than just about money for food or clothing; it was about her connection with her family and all associated with that. The loss of this coin would have grieved her a lot. Which in turn speaks to the intensity of the search she makes to find it. Like the shepherd's searching for the lost sheep, there is nothing casual about how she goes about the search. It's clear that she is focused and determined, resolved to do all she can to find the coin. When daylight goes down, she lights a lamp and continues with the search, looking and sweeping into every corner in her home. And, like the shepherd, when she does find the coin, she is not just relieved – she is filled with joy, for she too invites her friends and neighbours to join her in the celebration.

Again, the point is clearly made, this is not about the finding of a precious coin and all the joy that goes with that; this is Jesus speaking of the salvation of a soul to these men who are resentful of his being seen with tax collectors and sinners. Every human being made in the image of God is in the privileged position of owning God-given life, but that privilege will only be truly realised when there is a reconciled relationship with the life-giving God. And the point here is that which was lost was precious and only when it is found can it be fully restored.

Surely the point cannot be lost on you and me. God the Father rejoices at the result of the Holy Spirit's work, through the power of the gospel, which sees one sinner being saved. And now it is God who rejoices; some read this and conclude that it is the angels who rejoice, and I am sure that they do, as do the saints in heaven, but the rejoicing is done *before* the angels of God. Which surely means that the one principally rejoicing is God himself.

Q1. What is lost in this parable and why is it important?

Q2. Who rejoices at the work of the Holy Spirit which results in the salvation of one sinner?

## Monday – Please read Luke 15:1-7 – Why did Jesus come?

As we considered last week Jesus is here, as was often the case, being challenged by the Pharisees about an aspect of his life and/or teaching. They reeled at the evident authority of his teaching and simply couldn't abide the manner of his interaction with those whom they considered beyond the pale, that is, people whom they viewed as beyond the limits of acceptable religious life. As far as they were concerned, God was not interested in these people, so why should they be? So, when Jesus sat down and ate with tax collectors and sinners, they were angry and, as far as they were concerned, they were angry for God's sake. Their thinking was – how could this rabbi of God behave in such a way? That's the reason why these deeply religious men took things like this so extremely seriously. For them, it wasn't simply that Jesus' words and actions were directly attacking their teaching and religious way of life; it also reflected poorly on the character of God. So they were defending both their belief system, life choices, and God's honour.

On this occasion, though, Jesus does not engage with them as he has previously done. Typically, he would confront the Pharisees with a question specifically related to what they are thinking. On those occasions his objective, achieved through means of a simple question and answer process, was to show and condemn them of their error. In this chapter, as we shall see as we read it this week and next, Jesus brings three parables, one after the other. There is the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the parable of the lost son. Jesus' goal in presenting these parables is to challenge the Pharisees with two points because they are condemning him for his actions in eating with those whom they consider lost. His first point is that he has come specifically to seek and to save the one who is lost. And his second point is that when he finds that one who is lost and saves them, there is going to be rejoicing in heaven.

As we work through the chapter, we will find that when the sheep is found the shepherd calls his neighbours and invites them to rejoice with him. When the lost coin is found the woman calls together her friends and neighbours to rejoice with her, and when the son who is lost returns his father holds a party. The point is clear and simple – when a sinner who is lost is saved there is rejoicing in heaven, both in the presence of and by God himself.

Q1. Why were the Pharisees so angry with Jesus?

Q2. What two points did Jesus' answer make in response?

## **Tuesday – Please read Luke 15:1-7 –The Trinity and love.**

We considered yesterday that this passage is the start of Jesus presenting the Pharisees with three parables about things that are lost and are then found in the case of the first two, and a return in the case of the third. But why teach by asking questions and using parables? Well, the fact is that we seldom learn by just being told what to do. Yes, people will do as they are told if they like the person doing the telling, but that's not learning. A change of a teacher is always a good test of whether it has been a case of personality motivated compliance or genuine learning. Real learning, learning that changes thinking and actions, is a process that requires both thought and heart engagement. Jesus understood that, and that is why he taught so much by asking questions.

There is one final general point that I want to make before getting into the passage, and the fact that Jesus gives three parables here. The first speaks of the shepherd going out to seek the lost sheep, the second about the woman sweeping the floor for the lost coin, and the third about the father at home waiting on the son. Some have said, and I think there is merit in this, that when Jesus speaks of the work of the seeking shepherd, he is obviously speaking of himself. When he speaks of the woman looking for the lost coin, it refers to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, who works through the Bride, the church, by means of the ordinances and means of grace given to her by God for the saving of souls. And finally, the waiting father is God the heavenly Father, whose love goes out and waits for the lost sinner. In Galatians 4, Paul writes in verse 4, "In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son", and in verse 6, "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts", but there is no reference to God going out Himself; rather, there is a waiting on His part for the work which He has authored to be done in the mind and heart of the sinner.

Behind all the seeking and finding in these parables is 'love'. That's the power behind the truth in these parables. It is the love of Christ, the love of God the Holy Spirit, and the love of God the Father. Love is the pre-eminent factor that unites all the seeking and the waiting. Please remember that as we begin to consider each of them in turn tomorrow.

Q1. There are three parables here. In what way do they present the Trinity?

Q2. What is the core truth underlying all that is said in these parables?

## **Wednesday – Please read Luke 15:1-7 – The Lost Sheep.**

The first question Jesus asks is simple: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?" It is often assumed that the picture of the shepherd leaving the 99 safe sheep, points to Jesus leaving 99 righteous people to go after the one sinner who is lost. But is that the case? Are the 99 sheep 'safe' in the sense that they are the righteous who already have a place in heaven? Well, we will come back to that at the end of our meditation.

The shepherd leaves the 99 in the pastureland and goes in search of the lost sheep. He searches determinately, there is nothing half-hearted or 'going through the motions' about his search. Why? Because he loves this sheep, and when he finds it, he places the sheep on his shoulders, and returns home rejoicing. The intensity of the joy the man experiences at finding the lost sheep is evidently clear from what he does when he gets back home. He doesn't simply put the creature back with the flock and return to the regular duties of the day. No, everything stops, and he calls together his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him. This joy, this rejoicing over finding the lost sheep, is to be experienced by those close to him because it is such an important thing to him.

What a contrast to the attitude of the Pharisees and scribes. Their hearts were filled with resentment, manifesting itself in grumbling at the very thought that one of those with whom Jesus was eating might come to believe in God.

The parable is finished and Jesus declares with unrestrained authority, "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." What a wonderful reality that each time a person is converted, there is rejoicing in heaven. Why? Because the outworking of Jesus' death on the cross is being applied to a soul, and the eternal ramifications of that are glorious for that soul.

What of the ninety-nine? Are they righteous before God? No, Jesus knows who he is speaking to here. These are men who see themselves as being just, righteous before God because of their deeds, and therefore have no need to repent. Jesus' point to them is that this is not the case, but nonetheless he is willing to leave them and seek out those who know themselves to be unrighteous. How can we know that is the case? Because Jesus brings the lost sheep 'home' while the 99 are still in the open pastureland (See Luke 5:32, Luke 18:9).

Q1. Why does the shepherd leave the 99 and go after the one lost sheep?

Q2. Who are the 99 sheep?