

Teen Bible Study Notes: Friday, March 6, 2020

Presented by: Sheldon Monson

The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ – Lecture #46

Book and Chapter – Luke Chapters 15 & 16 (verses 1 -18)

LUKE 15

The parables in this chapter are found only in Luke’s Gospel account. They all make the same point – that there is joy over a sinner that repents! In these parables Jesus instructs us on how we should respond to repentant sinners – in the same manner that God does!

Ezekiel 33:11 “Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’”

God hates the sin, but loves the sinner. And, he always, extends mercy forgiveness and upon true repentance.

We see a progression through the three parables from the relationship of one in a hundred (**verses 1-7**), to one in ten (**verses 8-10**), to one in one (**verses 11-32**) – demonstrating God’s love for each individual.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

V1 Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.

V2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

The setting for the following parables is provided – we find the Pharisees and scribes deriding Jesus for receiving and eating with sinners. This accusation set the stage for three parables in which Jesus taught these Jewish authorities and us today how God deals with sinners.

The *scribes and Pharisees* believed that eating with such company conveyed an acceptance of that person’s sin. But they were wrong to think this way. Jesus ate with them, and spent time with them, because He was calling them to repentance.

You may recall what Jesus said in **Luke 5:32** – “I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

The Apostle Paul wrote in **I Timothy 1:15** “...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Sometimes important principles are repeated in the Bible for emphasis. In response to the chiding from the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus spoke three parables that emphasized His response.

V3 So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

V4 “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?

This was a good-sized flock. We see that the shepherd had 100 sheep. When one became lost, he left the 99 to search for the lost sheep. And, after bringing it home, he rejoiced with his friends and neighbors.

In the Bible, God’s people are commonly referred to as *sheep* or God’s flock (**Matthew 26:31; Luke 12:32; John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28-29**). Pastors are admonished to shepherd “the flock of God” (**I Peter 5:2**), and Jesus is referred to as the “Chief Shepherd” (**I Peter 5:4**).

The point of the parable is that God desires to bring those who are spiritually lost (sinners) into a renewed relationship with Him, and He rejoices when they repent.

V5 And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

V6 And 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!’

V7 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.

Jesus compared the joy of finding a lost sheep – to the *joy* in heaven over a sinner that repents. This sheep was part of the flock – but became lost.

James 5:19-20: V19 “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

V20 Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

Who need no repentance – is a rhetorical statement. A similar description is found in **Luke 5:31** where it is said that those were well had no need of a physician.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

V8 Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and seek diligently until she finds *it*?

A *silver coin* was equal to a day's wage for a basic laborer. The woman lit a *lamp*, and swept the floor in her diligent search to find the lost coin. And, after finding it, she also rejoiced with her friends and neighbors!

Some have wondered why such importance was placed upon the loss of a single coin. Commentaries have suggested two possible reasons. First, the household may have been poor, and under these circumstances the coin would have been important to the family. Second, the missing coin may have been part of a 10-coin frontlet that symbolized a wedding vow – similar to what a wedding ring represents today. In either case the coin was valuable to the one seeking it.

V9 And when she has found *it*, she call *her* friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’

V10 “Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Parable of the Lost Son

This story appears once in the Bible – it is only here in Luke's Gospel account. As we read the account we cannot but be captured by the story of a father's love for his wayward son.

Prodigal – means “being wastefully extravagant.” In this story the man's son recklessly and wastefully spends his inheritance.

The main character in the parable is a picture of **God the Father**. Jesus was using this account to teach those assembled, and us, of the Father's love for each of us.

And while we are all sinners (**Romans 3:23**), as was the prodigal son, it is heartwarming, comforting, and almost incomprehensible that God the Father is willing to accept us back, given the mistakes we have made. We should be deeply moved by this understanding.

However, we must be careful not to read right over the response God wants us to have to this parable. Throughout the Bible we see that God desires for us to **repent** and be reconciled to Him. He “commands all men everywhere to repent (**Acts 17:30**).

V11 Then He said: “A certain man had two sons.

V12 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.

We begin unfolding the meaning of this parable here in **verse 12**, in which the son asks his father for his share of his estate. The Father [*representing God the Father*] granted the request, illustrating how God permits each person to go his or her own way. God has given us the ability to make both good and bad choices – as we are free moral agents.

Deuteronomy 30:19 “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore chose life, that both you and your descendants may life;”

Philippians 2:12 “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;”

It is a sinful state that separates us from God (**Isaiah 59:2**).

Isaiah 59:2 “But your iniquities have separated you from your god; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear.”

V13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

The word *prodigal* describes a debased, extravagant life.

Proverbs 28:7 “Whoever keeps the law *is* a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.”

The son’s physical departure was a display of his willful disobedience to all the goodness his father had offered. In the process, he squandered all of his inheritance, which his father had worked so hard for on selfish, shallow fulfillment, losing everything.

V14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

His financial disaster was followed by a natural disaster in the form of a *famine*.

V15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

V16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*.

V17 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!’

What an irony that his choices led him to a position in which he had no choice but to work, for a stranger, doing the very things he refused to do for his father. And, to top it off, he apparently was paid so little that he longed to eat the pig’s food.

We also see that apparently, once his wealth was gone, so were his friends. The text clearly says – *no one gave him anything*.

The son learned the hard way that a life of sin leads to a life of dissatisfaction and disappointment. He also learned that the most valuable things in life cannot be bought. This parable is a picture of what sin really does in a person's life. Sin promises freedom but brings slavery. That's why Jesus said, "...whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (**John 8:34**).

However, his painful circumstances helped him to see his father in a new light. As he reflected back on his life, and the poor choices he had made, he realized the devastating consequences of sin. At this point, the destitute son is willing to give up his rights as his father's son and take on the position of his servant. Regardless of the motivation, it demonstrates a true humility and true repentance, not based on what he said, but on what he was willing to do, and acted upon.

V18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

V19 And I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

I have sinned – The son admitted his sin. He expected nothing and relied completely on the mercy of his father. So it is with the sinner who repents.

V20 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.

It is interesting to note that the father appears to be eagerly watching for and anticipating His son's return. Similarly, God greatly desires for us to repent of our sins and return to Him. God loves mankind so much that He gave His only begotten Son (**John 3:16**).

The description of the father's ***compassion*** is demonstrated in running to his son, kissing him, and ordering a celebration. It is a picture of how our heavenly Father feels towards a sinner who repents. God loves us and patiently waits for us to repent so he can show us great mercy.

V21 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.'

Father, I have sinned – Despite his awareness of being accepted by his father, the son continued to acknowledge that he had sinned. The son knew that he deserved nothing from his father and relied completely on his forgiveness and mercy.

V22 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.

The father accepted his son's apology and his confession of sin, but refused his request to make him a servant. Instead the returning son was made a full member of the family again. The words and an actions of the repentant sinner resulted in complete restoration!

The father orders the servants to bring the *best robe* (a sign of dignity and honor), *a ring* for the son's hand (a sign of authority and sonship), *and sandals* for his feet (servants did not wear shoes).

V23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry;

V24 For his my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

Such a transformation was a reason to celebrate!

Psalms 103:10-13: V10 "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.

V11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, *so* great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;

V12 As far as the east is from the west, *so* far has He removed our transgressions from us.

V13 As a father pities *his* children, *so* the LORD pities those who fear Him."

V25 Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

V26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

V27 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.'

V28 But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

The older brother's *anger* illustrates the response of the Pharisees and scribes at the prospect of sinners repenting and becoming begotten members of the family of God.

V29 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.

V30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

Note the contrast between the older brother's attitude here and the younger son's attitude in – **verses 19-21**. The older son proclaimed his own self-righteousness in comparison to his brother's sinfulness, and argued that justice had not been done.

The older brother did not even acknowledge the prodigal son as being his brother as he addresses him – *as this son of yours*.

The older brother's focus was on himself, and as a result there is no joy in his brother's arrival home. He is so consumed with issues of justice and equity that he fails to see the value of his brother's repentance. The older brother allows anger to take root in his heart to the point he is unable to show compassion towards his younger brother.

He fails to realize that “anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in darkness...

I John 2:9-11: V9 “He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

V10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

V11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

He prefers to nurse his anger rather than enjoy fellowship with his father, brother and the community. He chooses isolation over restoration and reconciliation.

I John 4:20-21: V20 “If someone says, ‘I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

V21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.”

V31 And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

V32 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.””

The father tenderly addresses the oldest as “my son: and corrects the error in his thinking by referring to the prodigal son as – *this brother of yours (verse 32)*. The picture of the father receiving the son back into the family is a picture of how we should respond to repentant sinners as well.

Whether it was a lost sheep, a lost coin, or a lost son, there is rejoicing when that which was lost is found!

All three parables in **Luke 15** also answer the question raised by the Jewish authorities and typified by the older brother in the third parable – whether it was appropriate for Jesus to care about and mingle with sinners. The parables show that God does care about sinners and rejoices when they repent, and are rescued from trouble. And so should we.

The rejoicing of God the Father, and the angels in heaven, is predicated upon REPENTANCE!

Repentance is a critically important subject for all who wish to be part of God's eternal Family.

God is "...longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (**II Peter 3:19**)

LUKE 16

The Parable of the Unjust Steward

V1 And He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting [*squandering*] his goods.

V2 So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'

The parable begins with a rich man calling his steward before him to inform him that he will be relieving him of his duties, for mismanaging his resources. A *steward* is a person who manages the resources of another. The steward had authority over all the master's resources and could transact business in his name. The steward is relieved for mismanagement, not fraud. This explains why he is able to conduct a few more transactions before he is released. Finally, the steward is to *give an account* of his stewardship.

Romans 14:12 "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."

II Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

V3 Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg.

V4 I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

V5 So he called every one of his master's debtors to *him*, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

V6 And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'

Measures – "*a bathous*" or a "*bath*" – is about 9 gallons (34 liters), so the debtor owes 900 gallons (3400 liters) of olive oil.

In this case the debtor receives a 50% discount.

V7 'Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

Measures – “*a core*” is at least 10 bushels (350 liters) or 1800 bushels (35,000 liters) of wheat.

In this case the debtor receives a 20% discount. These are hefty discounts on large quantities!

V8 “So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.

By making the debtors the beneficiaries, the unjust steward insulated himself from charges of theft while making friends who would feel obligated to help him in the future.

The rich man commended the manager because of his shrewdness. Seeing the urgency of his crisis, the steward had built bridges for the future. In the process he proved himself shrewd and decisive – not incompetent after all. And, in the process, he also succeeded in boxing in the rich man, who could not rescind the discounts without suffering loss of honor, and creating bad will among his debtors.

Jesus was drawing a contrast between the “sons of the world” (unbelievers) and the “sons of light” (believers). And he says that unbelievers are wiser [*more shrewd*] in the things of this world. Jesus is pointing out that we can learn something about acting prudently from the children of this age. The point of the parable is not that we should be dishonest, but that we should use every means at our disposal to prepare for the Kingdom of God!

Sons of light – Ephesians 5:8-9: 8 “For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

V9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth).”

V9 And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Mammon – The Greek word is a transliteration of a common Aramaic word *mamona*, which means “wealth,” “money,” or “property.”

Money or riches should be used generously to build works that last. Money is called *unrighteous mammon* because it often manifests unrighteousness and selfishness in people.

I Timothy 6:9-10: V9 “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

V10 For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

I Timothy 6:17-19: 17 “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy

V18 *Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

V19 Storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

The unjust steward saw his master’s resources as a means for his own personal advancement. Conversely Jesus wants His followers to be just, righteous stewards. We are to be generous with our wealth and use it for the benefit of others. We will reap what we sow (**Galatians 6:7-8**).

Galatians 6:7-8: V7 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

V8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

V10 He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much.

V11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*?

If one is faithful in little (i.e. unrighteous mammon), then one will be faithful in much. Similarly if one is dishonest in little, he will be dishonest in much. If we can’t be faithful with earthly wealth, which isn’t even ours to begin with, how can we be entrusted with “true riches”? The “true riches” here is referring to stewardship and responsibility in God’s Kingdom.

A person who cannot handle money certainly cannot handle spiritual matters that are of much greater value!

V12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?

I Peter 1:3-4: V3 “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

V4 To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,”

V13 No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

It is impossible to serve this god called “mammon” and the true God at the same time. In this chapter (**Luke 16**) this word is used for “riches,” considered an idol, master, or god of the human heart that is in conflict with the true God.

The Law, the Prophets, and the Kingdom

V14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.

V15 And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

V16 The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.

Question: Does Luke 16:16 mean that God’s law has been done away since the time of John as some have supposed?

Answer: No, that is not what Jesus meant at all. He explains it Himself in the very next verse: “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail” (**verse 17**). Have the starry heavens or the planet earth passed away? Jesus said it would be easier for them to perish or be destroyed than for even one tiny part of God’s law to pass away!

On another occasion, Christ told a young man seeking the way to eternal life, “...if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (**Matthew 19:17**). How clear that God’s holy law is still in full force and effect!

What, then, did Jesus mean by the statement: “The law and the prophets *were* until John? When Jesus spoke of the “law and the prophets,” He was referring to the Old Testament. The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, are known as the “law”; the books of Joshua through Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 Minor prophets comprise the “prophets.” The third major section of the Old Testament was known as the “writings” or “psalms.” (**Luke 24:27, 44**). Jesus meant that, until the coming of John the Baptist, the Old Testament scriptures were all that was available. The New Testament had not yet been written.

John came as a forerunner of Jesus Christ. As the “voice of one crying in the wilderness,” he prepared the way before Him (**Mark 1:2-8**). John thundered to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and all the people of His day, “...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (**Matthew 3:2**).

John began to proclaim the Gospel, preparing the way for Christ Himself. And what Gospel – good news – did Christ preach? **Mark 1:14-15: V14** “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching **the gospel of the kingdom of God**.

V15 And saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.’”

Christ preached the same Gospel as John. This is why He said that from the time of John the Baptist, the Gospel, or good news, of God’s coming Kingdom is proclaimed.

Personal Correspondence Department – L217.

V17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.

V18 Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from *her* husband commits adultery.