



*January 25, 2009*

*Luke 13 – 15*

*“Lost and Found”*

*Pastor Gary Hamrick*

Our previous study in Luke centered on three parables Jesus told. Our study today deals with three more parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Jesus uses these parables to address the taunting he’s getting from some Pharisees and teachers of the law. ([Luke 15:1–2](#)) Their objection is that Jesus is keeping company with undesirables, which is completely outside of their philosophy that godly people don’t associate with sinners! One of Jesus’ reasons for teaching these parables is to give them the correct understanding of God’s heart toward sinners.

The problem the Pharisees and the teachers of the law had was that they did not see themselves as sinners in need of a Savior. They had a self-righteousness derived from adhering to rules and regulations of a *religion*, which was in many aspects man-made.

So, what is a sinner? Paul, in [Romans 3:23–24](#), makes it very clear when he writes: “[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Okay, that’s pretty clear, but what does justified through Christ mean? God’s desire is for a sinner to repent, meaning to admit sin and turn *from* sin, and turn *to* God by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, which justifies the believer before God. Someone has put forth a way to understand this theological truth: Justified means *just as if I’d never sinned!*

Another reason Jesus teaches these parables is that he wanted his hearers to know that once they’ve been justified in Christ, they were to partner with the Lord to bring as many others into relationship with him as they could, so others would experience that same love and forgiveness.

In this study we will look at several challenges Christians face today in being a part of the process of bringing others, namely that some people recognize their sinfulness and see their need for a Savior, but they don’t know how to get there or what to do. While others don’t see their deceitful heart at all and, therefore, don’t see any need for a Savior. Finally, there are others who know they’re sinful, but they like it that way and have no desire to change.

Additionally, Jesus is also telling us some very important things about people, their lost condition, and their need to be forgiven whether they recognize it or not. There are a number of common themes in each of these parables. Finally, each parable represents different types of people ([Luke 15:7, 10](#)), the fact that all are lost ([Luke 15:6, 9, 24](#)), all are worth recovering, and all require different methods to reach, because all three are at different places in their relationship with God.

### Parable of the Lost Sheep ([Luke 15:3-7](#))

1. The sheep knows it's lost, but can't find its way back home.
2. Some interesting facts about sheep include:
  - a. Sheep are followers, and if one jumps off a cliff, many others are likely to follow.
  - b. Sheep never walk in a straight line because they are always looking for predators.
  - c. Sheep can sense danger from as far away as 1200 to 1500 yards.
  - d. Sheep have wide-angle vision and have a keen sense of smell.
  - e. Sheep stray easily.
  - f. Sheep don't have a good sense of direction.
  - g. When sheep become lost, they just sit down and wait to be rescued.
3. Jesus says the shepherd will leave the 99 and go out to find the one that's gone astray.
4. When the shepherd finds it, he *"joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home."* ([Luke 15:5-6](#))
5. There are some people, like the lost sheep, who know:
  - a. They're lost.
  - b. They've messed up their lives.
  - c. They're haunted by mistakes and sinful choices.
6. These lost people don't know what to do, because of guilt, shame or embarrassment.
7. These people don't need:
  - a. Anyone to convict them.
  - b. Another sermon, lecture, or guilt trip, accompanied by a wagging finger!
  - c. Anyone to convince them they're lost.
8. What these people need is someone who will find them and give them grace, and lovingly carry them to the Lord. They need someone who will lift them and love them and bring them to Jesus.
  - a. [Galatians 6:1-2](#) says, *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."*
  - b. Paul, in [1 Corinthians 5:1-12](#), deals with a man involved in known sexual sin. Remarkably, the Lord does his work in this man's life, and Paul writes about the need to forgive and restore this man in [2 Corinthians 2:7-8](#).

### Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10)

9. The coin doesn't know it's lost, but you do.
10. The woman has 10 silver coins,<sup>1</sup> each worth a day's wage.
11. She goes to great lengths to locate the lost coin because it's valuable and worth looking for!
12. Again, just like the lost sheep, there is celebrating when what was lost is found.
13. Like the coin, there are some people who don't understand how lost they are.
14. They're not broken or convicted, nor do they want to be found.
15. This parable includes a combination of urgency and value: Find the lost coin!
16. **Jude 22–23** says, *“Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them.”*
17. We're to search for people like this, avoiding the natural tendency to write them off or be content to let them remain in their lost condition.

### Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11–24)

18. The lost son is content to be lost until a crisis comes.
19. Free will and a sinful nature make it possible for a person, even though they've been raised by the same parents with the same values, to become lost.
20. Some people have to learn the hard way. (**Proverbs 13:15**)
21. Interestingly enough, no one in this parable goes out looking for the son, which is very different from the reaction of the shepherd and the woman toward that which was lost.
22. The reason the father, or anyone else for that matter, doesn't go out to look for the son is because the lost son hasn't come to his senses yet, which means he won't be at all ready to get his life right until he hits rock-bottom.
23. This is one of the most painful and helpless things to watch, when a prodigal is lost as can be and is happy to be there.
24. Parents and others who have a prodigal are so desperate to recover the lost, that they will plead, beg, run after, bail out, throw money at and tolerate sin under their own roof; all of which won't

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<sup>1</sup> Drachma

ultimately work, because these individuals need to come to the end of themselves before they're open to the working of God in their life.

25. We are to wait and pray for people like this, letting them know you are a true friend or a loving parent, but that you are not going to keep after them at all costs.

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Luke 15:1–24](#) to provide an overview of today's study.
3. Spend time talking about people and churches that have an “Us four and no more” mentality toward unbelievers.
  - a. Do you think these people/churches have a correct understanding of God's heart toward *sinner*s?
4. Do you know people who are like the lost sheep?
  - a. Why do you think they've convinced themselves that they are too far from God?
  - b. What does this parable instruct us to do with people like this?
    - i. Make sure you focus on the fact that no one is too far away from God that he cannot forgive!
    - ii. Read and discuss [Galatians 6:1–2](#) and [2 Corinthians 2:7–8](#).
5. Do you know people who are like the lost coin?
  - a. What does this parable instruct us to do with people like this?
    - i. Make sure you focus on the fact that Christians are called to be a part of the process of evangelism, and that people we know may be ready to receive the gospel.
    - ii. Encourage the people in your group to be involved in the process of planting, watering, tending and harvest aspects of evangelism.
  - b. Read and discuss [Matthew 13:44](#).
    - i. The correct interpretation for this parable reveals that we are the treasure and the Lord is the one who's given everything to purchase the treasure because it was of inestimable value.
  - c. Read and discuss [Jude 22–23](#).
6. Do you know people who are like the lost son?
  - a. What does this parable instruct us to do with people like this?
  - b. Spend time talking about the prodigals you know.
  - c. What does the parable say about the father when you read that “*while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him*”?
  - d. Read and discuss [Proverbs 13:15](#).

7. Close your time by allowing everyone in your group to: ask the Lord to show them the people he wants them to search for and lovingly carry to Jesus; ask the Lord to show them the people he wants them to wait on and pray for; seek to understand God's heart for lost people; pause and consider the symphony of praise that is constantly taking place in heaven when each and every sinner comes to repentance and faith in Christ; ask for the empowering of the Holy Spirit to be a part of the process of evangelism, remembering the words of **Proverbs 11:30** , which says, "*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.*"; praise the Lord for his power to save the lost!