

# Hurry home, honey!

## Luke 15:11-31

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father. But 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. <sup>21</sup> The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!

<sup>31</sup> "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

## 1. Rebellion

### ▸ He wanted his own wealth

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

### ▸ He wanted his own wild and wicked way

<sup>13</sup> Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

## 2. Ruin

### ▸ Foolishness met famine

<sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

### ▸ Partier met pigpen

<sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

### ▸ Hunger met heartlessness

<sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

## 3. Return

### ▸ He came to his senses

<sup>17</sup> "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

### ▸ He calculated his strategy

<sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

### ▸ He commenced his start

<sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

## 4. Restoration

### ▸ Note the reaction from the father

<sup>20</sup> But 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. <sup>21</sup> The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

### ▸ Note the restoration into the family

<sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

### ▸ Note the rationale for the feasting

<sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

## 5. Resentment

### ▸ The older son was steamed

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

### ▸ The older son was selfish and sassy

<sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!

## 6. Refocusing

### ▸ "My substance is your bounty!"

<sup>31</sup> "My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

### ▸ "My son is your brother!"

<sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

- ▶ *If you're a runaway, come to your senses, remember the Father's love, and hurry home, honey!*
- ▶ *If you're slipping away from home and from home-life, turn around and wrap yourself in the Father's arms!*
- ▶ *When a lost brother or sister comes home, rejoice in the privilege of being family together in a great household!*
- ▶ *Learn to love the company of the Father and the family so much that you'd never want to be anywhere else!*

# Luke 15 – The Three "Lost" Parables

<sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

## The LOST SHEEP

<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' <sup>7</sup> I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

## The LOST COIN

<sup>8</sup> "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' <sup>10</sup> In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

## The LOST SON

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

☛ **The two main characters in all three parables:**

- (1) **Something LOST** – *this is the sinner*
- (2) **Someone LOOKING** – *this is the Savior*

☛ **The two main themes in all three parables:**

- (1) **the HEARTACHE in losing something loved**
- (2) **the HAPPINESS in locating something lost**

## The Pharisees of Jesus' Day

- ☛ The Pharisees were one of the two primary religious/political parties (along with the Sadducees) mentioned in the New Testament who exerted sway during Jesus' day.
- ☛ The Pharisees believed in the scriptural authority of the Old Testament including the books of Moses, the books of history, the psalms, proverbs and prophets.
- ☛ The Pharisees believed in the future resurrection of the dead, both righteous and unrighteous, and believed in the existence and ministry of angels and spirits.
- ☛ Differentiated from Pharisees, Sadducees only believed the Law of Moses was scripturally authoritative, and they did not believe in the resurrection, angels, or spirits.
- ☛ During the New Testament period, the Pharisees were the predominant party, though the Sadducees controlled the high priesthood.
- ☛ The Gospels and Acts paint the Pharisees as super-religious, exceedingly legalistic, unsympathetic toward the common man, and often hypocritical with impure motives.
- ☛ Theologically, however, Jesus would have believed with and been aligned with the Pharisees.
- ☛ Many believers in the early Church were Pharisees, including those who held leadership positions in the church (Acts 15:5).
- ☛ The Apostle Paul was a Pharisee and continued to claim that affiliation (Acts 23:6; Acts 26:5; Philippians 3:5).

## The Tax Collectors of Jesus Day

- ☛ Tax collectors in the New Testament period were those employed by the Roman Empire to serve as government representatives for purposes including tax collection.
- ☛ In first-century Israel, local Jews were often employed as publicans (tax collectors), and therefore served as intermediaries between the Romans and the Jews.
- ☛ Jewish tax collectors, then, were viewed by the Jewish people as sympathizers with Rome, collaborators with the occupying enemy, and traitors to their own people.
- ☛ These tax collectors often became wealthy, as they received a "cut" of the taxes they were able to collect from the people before sending the collection on to Rome.
- ☛ Furthermore, the tax collectors in Israel were famous for their fraudulent methods and their over-taxation of the people for their own benefit, and they were despised.
- ☛ Remember the charge given by John the Baptist to the tax collectors who came to be baptized during his ministry in Luke 3:12-13.

Luke 3:12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" <sup>13</sup> "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

- ☛ The best historical example of a publican, or tax collector, in the New Testament is Zacchaeus, described in Luke 19:1-10.

Luke 19:1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. <sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup> So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. <sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" <sup>8</sup> But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

- ☛ The story of Zacchaeus illustrates these historical realities:

1. the potential wealth for those hired by the Romans as tax collectors – *"he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy";*
2. the loathing of the tax collectors by the people – *"All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner'";* and
3. the cheating inflicted by the tax collectors upon the people – *"And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."*

- ☛ Both the inclusion of the story of Zacchaeus and the inclusion of today's parable in Luke's Gospel emphasize this truth: *the most unpopular of sinners can be saved!*
- ☛ And, of course, Matthew 9:9 introduces us to Matthew, a tax collector who was chosen by Jesus to be one of the Twelve Apostles.

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. <sup>10</sup> While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples.