

# The Lost Son

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Now seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn to Luke 15 and read at verse 11.  
Luke chapter 15 at verse 11.

And he said, A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that followeth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country. And there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father shall have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

[ 1 : 15 ]     Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. Today we return to this passage of scripture that we find in Luke's gospel in chapter 15.

Now previously, we have noted that what we have here in Luke chapter 15 is a three-part parable. You will recall that Jesus spoke this parable because the scribes and Pharisees were deeply offended by the fact that Jesus associated himself with those whom they regarded as sinners.

sinners. That is, those who did not keep the law in the way that they did. In other words, the sinners were religious outsiders.

And Luke here records for us, Then drew near unto all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Now the first part of the passage brings before us the shepherd going forth and seeking the lost sheep until he found it. And when we looked at that passage, we noted that this involved a journey for the shepherd.

[ 2 : 41 ]     The shepherd, of course, represents Jesus Christ. A journey that took him into the sinful world. A journey that meant that he had to take to himself the nature of those that he came to save.

Something that cannot be true of any shepherd, taking the nature that belongs to his flock. Hence, Jesus is depicted for us in the Bible as the lamb.

When he found the lost sheep, he brings the sheep home. And then we read, And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repented, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

The question is often asked, Who are the ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance? I think that Jesus was taking a sharp jab at the Pharisees and scribes who were so sure of their own righteousness that they did not even think that they needed repentance.

[ 3 : 53 ] Here we are shown also that the church of Jesus Christ cannot but rejoice when sinners repent of their sin and come to Jesus for their salvation.

When a sinner repents of his sin, it affects heaven. It touches the heavenly realm. For we read that joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repented.

Now the second part of the parable is the story of a woman who lost, but found her missing coin. The woman kept searching until she found her missing coin.

Then we are told, And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the peace which I had lost.

Just like the shepherd, she calls together her friends and neighbours to rejoice with her. Again, we are reminded that the church of Jesus Christ cannot but rejoice when sinners repent of their sin and come to Jesus for their salvation.

[ 5 : 02 ] It is always a joy to find something that is missing. Again, there we are reminded that when a sinner repents of their sin, it affects heaven.

It touches the heavenly realm. For there we read, Likewise I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repented.

Now today we come to the third part of the story, which is probably the most familiar part of the story, if not the most familiar of all the parables that Jesus spoke.

It is commonly called the parable of the prodigal son. Now, although we tend, when we read this part of the parable, to focus upon one certain son, it is actually a story or a parable about three persons.

It is a parable that is about a father and his two sons. For we read, A certain man had two sons.

[ 6 : 13 ] So the whole of this part of the parable is about that, about this man and his two sons. And today we are going to focus our attention on the first son, which is the one who is more prominent in the story, the one who stands out more in the story.

Now, we do not want to add anything to the story. A mother is not mentioned. The early years of the sons are not mentioned, but we can assume that the sons grew up in a stable home.

However, we have the tendency sometimes to think that this son, upon whom our focus is today, became lost after he left home.

But the fact is that he was lost even at home. We read here, And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.

Now, if we just glance over these words, we may think that the son was simply asking his father for that part of the inheritance that would eventually become his.

[ 7 : 31 ] In accordance with the law, the older son would get two-thirds, while the younger son would get a third of the inheritance. Now, their father was a wealthy man, for in the story we see that he had herds of livestock and hired servants.

And a third of such inheritance would be quite a lot. But something had to happen before he could come into possession of the inheritance.

The father had to die. The son had a legal right to the inheritance, but the son had to wait until the father died to possess and do with the inheritance what he wanted to do.

What the son in our story did was to go to the father and tell his father to hand over the inheritance now.

He wanted full control of the inheritance now. He just could not wait to have his lot and his independency to be away from his father and the family home.

[ 8 : 44 ] Although the son did not break the law, for he was entitled to a third of his father's estate, nevertheless we see in this story that he broke his relationship with the father.

He had no love towards his father. His father was in his way. If only his father was dead.

But his father continued to live. He gave no respect whatsoever to his father. He wanted the father, what the father could give him.

But he did not want the father himself. The son was in the home, but because of this broken relationship with the father, he was lost even before he went away from his family home.

It is a reminder to us that we can have all the privileges of home and yet be lost. Because to be spiritually lost is to be in a broken relationship with God.

[ 10 : 06 ] We want his gifts and his blessings. We put our demands upon him and at the same time we have no desire for him.

No love to him. No respect for him. We go on living in a broken relationship with him. And that leaves us lost.

We had all the privileges. He, the son, had all the privileges of home life. And yet he was lost. And we have all the privileges of being brought up under the word of God.

Being brought up under the preaching of the gospel. We may have had the privilege of baptism. We have the privilege of prayer. Maybe a Christian home in certainly a Christian community.

And yet, we may be lost because we are in a broken relationship with God. That's what leaves us lost to be in a broken relationship with God.

[ 11 : 18 ] Despite all the privileges that we have in our Christian community, in our Christian home, the preaching of the gospel and so on, in spite of all the gifts and the blessings that we have from God, yet, we live in a broken relationship with him.

And that leaves us lost. Then we read, And he divided unto them his living. Now the word that is used here for living also means life.

It tells us that the Father was giving his very life and dividing it among his sons. And what is remarkable here, I think, is that the Father granted to his younger son his desire.

You know, it reminds us that sometimes we ask or desire things of the Lord and the Lord gives it to us. But what do we do with it? We know that the older son stayed at home.

But we read of the younger son that not many days after the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

[ 12 : 41 ] The Father probably knew why the son wanted his portion of the inheritance. But the Father did not intervene in any way.

for the son was left freely to act upon his responsibility. The Father gave him his lot and it was up to the son to use it in a responsible way.

The Lord gives us much but the responsibility of action is ours. He gives us many privileges. He gives us many gifts gifts and blessings but the responsibility of how we use them is ours.

The Father gave him what he asked for what he desired but the responsibility of how he was to use that portion of his inheritance was his.

It belonged to the son. And it is clear to us now why the son wanted his portion of goods. He was going to leave home as fast as he could and he was not coming back.

[ 13 : 56 ] The expression gathered all together comes from the world of finance which means that the son turned his inheritance into cash and by the time he left home he had plenty of money.

Of course what he really wanted was to be away from his father and from his father's house. He wanted his freedom. He wanted his independency.

Now this story is not something that belongs to ancient times. Is it not true today that because of our sinful and fallen condition we have this quest this mission and pursuit for personal freedom and fulfilment.

The words of Isaiah ring true for mankind all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way.

The son's journey into the far country was in pursuit of personal freedom and fulfilment. it was in pursuit of independency to be away from the authority and the tradition and the rules of the family home.

[ 15 : 15 ] And how often have the sons and daughters of the church made the same journey in quest for freedom and independency. From the story we understand that the son went into Gentile territory.

he wanted to turn his back upon everything that Judaism represented. So he went into a Gentile territory.

And there we read that the son wasted his substance with riotous living. People today would call this that he got wasted.

When we say that a person has a riotous lifestyle we mean that they frequently behave in an excessive and uncontrolled way. For example by eating or drinking too much or when behaviour is noisily and lively in a rather wild way.

luxury. But the word here has the connotation of luxury. He was a young man with expensive tastes.

[ 16 : 25 ] One commentator says that he squandered his wealth in the wildest extravagance. He squandered his wealth in the wildest extravagance.

Not surprisingly therefore we read and when he had spent all. I am sure that during this period of time he had many friends but as money grew slack they soon forsook him and he was left alone.

His dreams were shattered. His world was turned upside down. Is this not a picture of those who want to run away from God?

From the privileges of being brought up in a Christian home and community? of being under the word of God? Instead of improving upon their privileges and opportunities they squander their time pursuing their own ways, pursuing their own pleasures and then they find themselves alone.

How many today is wasting their lives, feeding their addictions, indulging themselves and their passions and giving away themselves in reckless living and giving away all the gifts and talents of their inheritance, of their privileges.

[ 17 : 52 ] Instead of investing their gifts and talents into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, you may ask, well how will I invest my gifts and talents into the kingdom of Jesus Christ simply by trusting in him and following him and living for him.

It was bad enough that he was left alone. It was bad enough that he had no money that he had squandered at all. But a calamity was about to come that would leave him completely devastated.

For we read there arose a mighty famine, in that land. He had promised himself much of how he would spend that money.

But it never crossed his mind once that the day would come when he would run out of money. And he certainly never expected to run out of food.

But he began to be in want. God. There are things in our lives that can be difficult for us to explain.

[ 19 : 11 ] John Flavel wrote a book and he called it the mystery of providence. And truly it can be a mystery at least to us. As we read this story we cannot but be aware of two things.

The sovereignty of God and the mystery of providence. They both come together in this story.

The sovereignty of God and the mystery of providence. The son had recklessly misused his privileges. He had not acted responsibly.

Nevertheless the Lord's purpose for him was that he would be reconciled and that he would come back home. And the Lord uses means to bring about his purpose and hence we find that there was a mighty famine in that land.

It was not simply a famine but a mighty famine in that land. In his desperation he attempted to keep himself from starvation and so he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

[ 20 : 39 ] According to the law of Moses swine or pigs were ceremonially unclean and the thought of a Jewish boy feeding pigs were unthinkable.

I just wonder how the Pharisees and the scribes that were present as Jesus told the story reacted when they heard this. A Jewish boy feeding pigs animals that were ceremonially unclean.

But things got worse. For we read and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat and no man gave unto him.

He was so hungry that he wanted to eat what the pigs ate. But no matter how much he begged no one helped him. He was alone.

He was helpless. He was homeless. He was humiliated. He was lost. Now I want us for a moment to reflect upon our own lives.

[ 21 : 54 ] I want you to think of times in your own life when perhaps you struggled. It may have been in relationships, it may have been in finance, it may have been at work, it may have been in family, or perhaps even in your Christian life.

Times when you felt alone, that nobody cared. Perhaps even the thought came to you, well it would be better if I were to be away from it all and die. Dark moments indeed.

A mighty famine in your experience. And maybe you saw help there and nobody cared.

You saw help here and there but you found that no one cared and you were left, as Paul says in writing to the Ephesians, at that time you were without Christ, been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

You found yourself in a position that you could not explain. It was unexplained and unexplainable. If you are a Christian today, the unexplainable can be explained.

[ 23 : 11 ] It was the hand of God bringing you to yourself in order to bring you home. how many mystified providences has been in our lives and they have all been to our eternal good.

The sovereignty of God and his providence caused a mighty famine in the life of the Son and also in some of our own lives.

But maybe today you are in the very heart of the mighty famine. And you wonder whether you will ever get out of it. Can the unexplainable be ever explained in your life?

The Son in our story was left with absolutely nothing. He did not even have the bare necessities of life. But in the midst of feeding the pigs and his hunger, we read that he came to himself.

And this would be the turning point in this man's life. This would be the beginning of his spiritual journey. He came to himself.

[ 24 : 28 ] He had hit rock bottom and he was now coming to his senses. He was beginning to realise how lost he really was.

have you reached that turning point in your life? In which you realise that you have nothing? In which you realise that you are a lost sinner?

There is no greater isolation in this world than to know that you are a sinner, that you are out of relationship with God.

God. And this boy realised that if he continued on the road that he had embarked upon that it would be sure destruction for him.

All this may have shocked him. It may have turned his world upside down. But his only hope was to turn his face towards his father.

[ 25 : 31 ] His only hope was to swallow up his pride and go to the father and plead for the father's forgiveness. Maybe that is where you are today.

That your greatest need today is to swallow up your pride and turn to the Lord and seek his forgiveness. This boy began to think of his father's house.

He began to think of the privileges that he had despised. How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger.

The past comes before him and the privileges that he had abandoned so carelessly. However, never despair of Christian upbringing.

Although your sons and daughters may have like this boy left home and gone their own way, perhaps bringing many times of heartache into your experience.

[ 26 : 38 ] Remember this boy. When he came to have nothing, he remembered his father's house. Many a person, when they come to themselves, remember what they heard and what they saw.

Many a Sunday school lesson is recalled. Many sermons and many conversations and exhortations are brought back to mind. The prayers of a father and a mother are brought back to mind.

This boy remembered his father's house. He remembered the privileges of the home, the privileges of the hired servants. And in his own helpless and hopeless condition, he said, I perish.

I perish. There was no one to blame but himself. And this boy began to talk to himself.

He began to think and he spoke to his soul and he said, I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee and I'm no more worthy to be called thy son.

[ 27 : 57 ] Make me as one of thy hired servants. Now this was an exceptionally good intention. For he could have remained where he was, feeding the pigs, wallowing in his own thoughts and resentment.

He could have stayed there full of remorse, but he resolved to go unto his father. And he rehearsed the words that he would bring to his father.

he recognized that he had sinned. Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. Now we know the words I have sinned are heard by at least eight different people in scripture.

Four times they are said without reality by Pharaoh and Balaam and Saul and Judas. Even Achan used the same words. But there are also words that are used and said in sincerity by Job, David, and here by the prodigal son.

I have sinned against heaven and before thee. He has sinned both against his father and his God. But take the order in which he makes this confession.

[ 29 : 12 ] he says, I have sinned against heaven. That is, I have sinned against God and I have sinned against my father.

Like David in Psalm 51, he came to realise that against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.

Then the son expressed a deep sense of unworthiness that I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy higher servants.

The son shows very hopeful signs to us that he has begun on his spiritual journey. He confessed that he is a sinner before God.

He makes no excuses for his sin and he acknowledges his unworthiness and he acknowledges that his sin has affected others. Have you arrived at that place yourself?

[ 30 : 17 ] Have you arrived at the place where you confess that you are a sinner before God? Have you arrived at the place where you make no more excuses for your sin? Have you arrived at the place where you acknowledge your unworthiness and where you acknowledge that your sin surely did affect others?

While the son came to that place and he resolved to return back to his father that was his only hope and although he did not feel worthy to be called a son yet when he spoke about his father he called him father now everything looked good so far he had resolved to return to his father he had rehearsed what he would say but it all could have remained there how many perhaps among ourselves this morning who have resolved to come to Jesus Christ who have resolved to confess their sins and to follow Jesus and yet where are you today exactly in the same place as you were those many years ago when you made that resolution you came to that place where you resolved to follow

Jesus and yet where are you today exactly in the same place as you were those many years ago or perhaps we should not say that you are in the same place as you will probably have made your excuses or you will have hardened your heart however you are in the same place of lostness to God you could have made all these resolutions and yet remain in the same place of lostness to God the son made all these resolutions but if he remained where he was he was still lost he was still lost it would just remain a resolution good intentions and we can all have good intentions but it's another thing for these intentions to come to fulfilment let let this young man be an example to you for here we read and he arose and came to his father and that's the place to which every lost sinner needs to return through repentance is arising up and coming to

God through repentance is not just making a resolution or having good intentions or promising yourselves things true repentance is arising up and coming to God yes everything that went before was preparatory work it was laying the foundation but it could have remained there and would be nothing more than remorse surely one of the differences between remorse and repentance is this that remorse looks to oneself to the eye while repentance looks towards God remorse is self centred while repentance is God centred this is the hinge upon which the whole story turns and he arose and came to his father if you have back slitting from

God the Lord says take with you words and turn to the Lord say unto him take away all iniquity and receive us graciously so will we render the calves of our lips usher shall not save us we shall not ride upon horses neither will we say any more to the works of our hands ye are our gods for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy and the Lord replies and he says I will heal their back sliding I will lull them freely for mine anger is turned away from him and for the sinner in the gutter the same is true for you today come come to the Lord come with your words to the father of mercies this young man did what he resolved had resolved to do he started out and kept going it must have been a long journey for he had gone into a far country nevertheless he knew that for him to have any meaningful life to have any meaningful hope was to return to his father's home and to be reconciled to his father and to receive his father's forgiveness his return trip may have been difficult but he persevered many thoughts may have gone through his mind he may have thought well will my father receive me after all

[ 35 : 46 ] I have done I am coming back with the husks from the pigsty still clinging to my clothes I am not coming back clean but filthy and rocks will my father accept me as I am and today such thoughts may be going through your mind will the Lord receive me after all my sins will the Lord accept me as I am David in Psalm 39 writes my wounds stick and are corrupt because of my foolishness I am troubled I am bowed down greatly I go mourning all the day long for my loins are filled with a loathsome disease and there is no sourness in my flesh I am feeble and sore broken I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart and there David was troubled and his trouble was because of his sins and that's the way he describes it in such vivid language but then see what

David adds he says Lord all my desire is before thee and my groaning is not hid from thee the prodigal son's desire was made so manifest in his desire to return to his father whatever thoughts that may be yours today whatever stumbling blocks you may imagine may you have a deep desire in your heart today to reconcile to the Lord to receive his forgiveness to know his peace to have peace with God remember the Lord's invitation come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest remember this words him that cometh to me

I will in no wise cast out come sinner the father awaits and as the son made his journey home however difficult it may have been whatever thoughts that may have crossed his mind to discourage him he was on the way to the father he was coming to the way on the way to the father for the father's reconciliation for the father's forgiveness and he found out that the father was waiting come sinner come sinner the father awaits may the lord bless our thoughts let us pray eternal and ever blessed lord we give thanks to thee for the revelation that thou hast made of thyself and thy word that thou art the father of all mercies for the great invitations and promises that thou hast given to us come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and

I will give you rest and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out oh lord we pray that there would be many today who would not only be making resolutions who would not only be talking to their souls but who would arise who would rise up and come to the father of all mercies we give we give thanks to thou are inviting sinners and that thou are waiting for them that thou are waiting to forgive and to be gracious and to reconcile that thou are waiting to manifest thy grace to them oh lord grant to us that we would be encouraged that we would be encouraged to call sinners to come to repentance to call sinners to come to the Lord for forgiveness knowing that thou art God that delighteth in showing mercy we pray oh lord that thou would bless thy word to us that thou would lodge it into our hearts and that we would meditate upon them even when we leave this place that we would meditate upon the passage that we have read that we would meditate upon the journey of the son into the far country and his return to the father we pray oh lord that thou would continue with us forgive us for all the sins that we committed thought and word and in deed and all that is through thine own son through the efficacy of his finished work upon the cross of



Golgotha we give thanks for his continual ministry and for the great promise of his return may the grace of our lord jesus christ and the love of god and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all now and forever more amen thank