

The Good Shepherd

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[0 : 00] I would like us to turn again to that portion of the scripture we've just been reading, Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15, really the beginning of that chapter.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him, and the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

So the Lord told them this parable, What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the open country and go after one that is lost until he finds it?

Or, verse 8, What woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?

And also, he said, There was a man who had two sons. Among the two dozen or so parables that are contained in the Gospels, we have these three parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.

[1 : 36] And quite a number of the Lord's parables deal with salvation. And these are the parables that are most memorable to us.

They're stories which are taken very much from real life. They relate to us in a very real way as to our own experience in salvation.

And they remind us of the way that the Lord has led us and brought us to know the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

But I suppose, as J.C. Royal once said, there's been no chapter ever used so much by God as this 15th chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

And so we have here, really, the Lord's heartfelt desire to bring men and women, boys and girls, to a knowledge of himself and to a salvation that he has prepared for them in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 44] In that first parable, we know that the good shepherd is one who goes out looking for lost sheep.

But the good shepherd is not only portrayed for us in that first parable. The good shepherd is portrayed for us in the lost sheep and the lost coin and the lost son.

There's no difference as far as our Saviour is concerned of the loss of one out of a hundred or one out of ten or even one out of two.

In each case, there is sorrow in our Saviour's heart. And in each case, there is much joy experienced by him in the recovering of that which was lost.

And as he himself says, and just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

[3 : 52] The parables also speak of our own miserable condition in being separated from God. In each case, that which was lost remained very valuable to the person who had lost it.

In this situation, as we find the Lord telling these parables, it's he himself. It is the father or the Lord himself who has great sorrow in his own heart at that which is lost.

Because in each case, it is valuable. Valuable in the relation here of the parables that really valuable to God himself. So we have here first looking at these three parables together.

We have a description of the Saviour God. He is the God who reaches out to people. He is the God who is not only a Saviour God, but a God who is a God who loves.

A God who saves. A God who treasures. A God who desires. And a God who rejoices. In Isaiah chapter 53, Isaiah compares sinners to lost sheep.

[5 : 13] And so we have this parallel between that first parable and with what Isaiah has to say in that particular chapter.

We are all like sheep having gone astray. Each one having gone his own way. As we look back on our own lives, we can see how far we departed from the way the Lord would have us go.

And how much he did in our own experience to bring us back into the right way. And how much he did in our own experience to bring us back into the right way. Hedging up our ways, directing us in that path of holiness and righteousness.

But as Isaiah tells us, even when we were lost, the Lord was led as a lamb to the slaughter.

And the sheep before its shearers was done. He did everything in his power. Everything in his own experience to find us, to restore us, to redeem us to himself.

[6 : 22] Now each of these parables of the shepherd and the woman and the father represent God becoming deeply committed to our salvation.

Now, as the Lord told these parables, the scribes and Pharisees couldn't understand or see what the Lord was trying to get them to understand.

In fact, these parables are told in response to the carping of the scribes and Pharisees against the Lord's behavior. That he was being counted as a friend of publicans and sinners.

That he was courting them and reaching out to them and bringing the gospel to them. When they, in their own self-righteousness, would shun them and leave them to their own deserts and to their own lifestyles.

And so, be outcasts, not only from society here, but outcasts also from heaven. And yet, that's not what the Lord desired.

[7 : 32] He was the friend of publicans and sinners. He was the one who would desire to save them and bring them back from the lostness of their lives.

Publicans, of course, were those who were outside society. Those who were the lawyers of that day.

The tax collectors were those who were allying themselves to the occupying army and collecting unjust taxes. And so, we have all these different people who, according to the scribes and Pharisees, were beyond the pale.

And so, were not worthy, worth bothering with or reaching out to. But that's not the way that the Lord reached the people and talked to them.

And that's why the people heard him gladly. That's why they reached out to him as he reached out to them. And there was this common aspect of love and attraction that evolved between the two of them because of the way that the Lord behaved.

[8 : 38] And the same would apply to all of us also. The more we would reach out to those who perhaps we might think are beyond the pale, the more they would see and understand the gospel being lived out in our lives and our desire to bring them into the country which the Lord has provided for all his people.

Now, in this work of salvation, we've heard it said very often that the Father plans the salvation. The Lord achieves the salvation by his work on the cross and his dying for the sins of the many.

And the Holy Spirit applies it to us individually. Redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ in response to his Father's desire that he would become the salvation, savior of mankind.

And redemption applied by the Holy Spirit bringing us to a saving knowledge, awakening in us a desire and a knowledge, an understanding of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

And ultimately, this is our only hope. The work of effectual calling in your life and mine. As the Holy Spirit applies the gospel to us in reminding us of our lostness, the terrible state of us, convincing us, as the Catechism says, of our sin and our misery.

[10 : 24] Convincing us of the sin in which we live and the misery which that sin brings about, not only in this life, but that which is to come.

And then also in that effectual calling, after convincing us of us in the misery, he enlightens our minds, our understanding and the knowledge of Christ as to who he is.

The wonder of Christ, the majesty of Christ, that he is not just the man next door, not just the elder brother, but he is our Lord and our God.

The one who inhabits eternity. The dust of the earth who has ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high. He is a great God, a great Lord.

He is our savior. And that's what the Holy Spirit does to us in effectual calling. He reveals to us the nature of Christ and the majesty of Christ and opens our hearts to desire him.

[11 : 22] He awakes in us a need of Christ. Hearts that have been closed, hearts which have been shut off from Christ, are suddenly brought to know a need and desire for Christ.

So we would close in with him for time and for eternity. Until eventually we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to embrace Jesus Christ as he has offered to us in the gospel.

And all this here, as we see, is the work of God. It's not what we have to do. The gospel declares what God has already done. And that's what the Holy Spirit does for us in effectual calling.

He reveals to us what God in Christ has done. And that the way of salvation is open. And all we have to do is walk in it.

See, ultimately, that is our only hope. Not that we have to do something which is absolutely impossible. None of us can save ourselves.

[12 : 29] But because of what God in Christ has already done for us. And in the gospel of Luke, the Lord says, Ask and it will be given to you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. And if he says it, shall he not do just what he has promised.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Each and every one of us, as we were brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, We were brought by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge our lostness.

Our need of a saviour. Someone to redeem us. Someone to find us. Someone to restore us. To that which our Father in heaven made us to be at the beginning.

And so what these parables here reveal to us is a God who is sorrowing. A God who is seeking. A God who is finding. A God who is rejoicing.

[13 : 43] In these different aspects of emotions that God himself experiences. In the work of the gospel. Each one of us who has been saved has been sought and been found.

And that's what redemption is. He used to tell the story of children's meaning of what redemption is.

That I made you. I lost you. And I found you. Or so I've made you. I've lost you.

I found you. And I've bought you. And so in these different ways the work of the gospel goes on. God himself brings us to himself.

And so we know the joy and the fellowship of our Father who is in heaven. It doesn't matter what our past lives might have been.

[14 : 42] It doesn't matter that we might have strayed far away. It doesn't matter what sort of crimes we might have been guilty of in our lives before we are brought to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Because Isaiah says in chapter 55. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him return unto the Lord.

For he will have mercy on him. And he will abundantly pardon. Whatever it is. God delights in mercy. God delights in pardon.

God delights in redemption. God delights in forgiveness. And so we have here this picture of the Savior God.

The God who delights to save. The God who delights that man should perish. But that all should come to redemption in Christ Jesus. But then we've got to ask.

[15 : 44] What is the nature of the salvation that God here is revealing to us in these parables? Although we've just seen that it's God who seeks and who finds and restores.

It's never without the saving grace of repentance unto life. And again you know that catechism.

Repentance unto life is a saving grace. Whereby a sinner out of his true sense of his sin. And an apprehension. An understanding.

An apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Doth with grief and hatred turn from his sin unto God. With full purpose of an endeavor after new obedience.

That's what redemption is. God working in us. It's a saving grace which he dispenses. Every grace is given to us.

[16 : 51] Very often we have different definitions of what grace can be or can be understood as. We had one of them given on the Lord today.

We are the undeserving love of God towards us. But there's also another definition of grace which appertains in relation to salvation.

He is determined to save us. He will go over hell and high water as they used to say. He will do anything to bring us to a saving knowledge of himself.

He is determined to make us Christ-like. You should remember again in Romans chapter 8. Those whom he calls them he also glorifies.

Those whom he glorifies them he also justifies. Why? That he might conform us to the image of his son. That's his desire. That's his determination.

[17 : 51] And grace in one aspect of his definition is God's determination to make you and me Christ-like. He wants us to be like the son of his own love.

Whenever we read the parable of the prodigal son, we think of the father perhaps staying at home helplessly wondering what on earth is happening to his son in this far country.

It's not that he's not missing him. But it appears that he's not doing anything to try and find him. The son has rebelled.

The son has wasted the inheritance the father has given to him. The son has fallen into the bondage of sin and uncleanness. And the father seems to be absolutely helpless about the whole thing.

He longs for his son. But he doesn't look for him. He doesn't try to find him. And so it appears that it's all down to the son's own will.

[19 : 03] He says, I will go and return to my father. But that's to totally misunderstand salvation in all its different aspects.

Before we can have such a desire, before we can have that desire to return home or to look for God, God has to do something in us.

He has to make us willing in a day of his power. God must work in us the willing and the doing of his good pleasure. One of the tests we can apply to ourselves as we live out our Christian lives.

Are we working out the willing and the doing that God has worked into us? Are we following the pattern he has given us in the scriptures?

Are we following the examples of those who have gone before us? Those whom we've known are godly and God honoring and God fearing?

[20 : 07] Are our lives measuring up to the scriptures? Are we following the way that God would have us to go? Are we working out what God has worked into us?

These two things go together. We must work out what God has worked into us. When God finds us, by putting his Holy Spirit into us, we come to our senses.

And in that sense, when we're told in the parable of the prodigal son, he came to his senses. He was beside himself and he came to his senses. Now that can only happen if the Holy Spirit begins that work in him.

He comes to his senses because the Holy Spirit begins to strive with the prodigal in the far country. And so we also, living a life apart from God, come to our senses.

We repent of our sin and we begin to seek God. It's all of a one. You can't have one part and not have the other.

[21 : 14] Yes, we are brought to our senses. We have an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. We begin to understand God's mercy that he's provided for us in Christ Jesus.

We turn from our sin. We repent of our sins. We do with grief and hatred, turn from it. With full purpose after and desire to seek God and to please God.

And so we come to know that misery, that sin brings to us.

We come to understand the misery of our old lives. Perhaps we've been living in sin and it's had no impact on our daily lives. But as the Holy Spirit begins to deal with us, so we are brought to an understanding that we are apart from God.

God has a controversy with us. In the natural heart, we are blind to it. We imagine ourselves to be happy.

[22 : 20] We imagine ourselves to have self-fulfilling lives. We imagine ourselves to be fulfilling all that God desired of us.

And yet, when we are brought to understand the truth that is in Christ Jesus, we're totally dejected and miserable because we're apart from God.

See, God has said to us, the wages of sin is death. But the devil keeps coming to say to us, you shall not surely die.

The problem with many people who are on the fringes of Christianity, who say they are seeking after God and are not really, is because their hearts are already full.

Why are those people who say they are seeking still unable to get, not satisfaction, but get peace in their searching after God?

[23 : 27] Because such hearts are already complete. If you think of the church in Laodicea, they were seeking after God, but yet we're told they were blind and they were poor and naked.

They thought themselves rich. They thought themselves full. They thought they had everything. Yet Christ said, sure not. You're poor and you're blind and you're wretched and you're naked.

And they're in such a way because their hearts were full, full of their own importance, full of their own pleasure, full of their own lifestyles, apart from God. And that's why so many people who are perhaps on the periphery of the church don't come into the church because their hearts are already complete.

there's no real desire to close in with Christ and to know him for their souls and for their salvation.

That's obviously what happened to the prodigal. When he fell on hard times, he still, remember, he's still in his sin.

[24 : 36] When he fell on hard times, he thought, well, this is only just for a short time. My, my ship will come in, the tide will turn and everything will get better.

He still has friends at that stage. But when friends have departed and deserted him because his money's right out, run out, when he has to go and find this detestable job in a pigsty, and, and when he's starving, he still thinks everything will turn around.

It's just for a short time. And when, when things turn around, he, he, he get into a better state of life and his funds will return. But it's only when he's at the point of death, only that when he's there at the very, the last vestiges of life in his own experience, he realizes that he has no one.

He has no friends, no benefactor, no one thinks, no one looking out for him, no one has any thought about him, and that he eventually comes to his senses.

And that phrase of, of the short of catechism, an apprehension of his father's love, suddenly comes to his mind.

[26 : 06] Who brought that to his mind? No one but the Holy Spirit. It wasn't suddenly idea that suddenly sprang to him. It was brought to him by the working of the Holy Spirit so that he might know a way of salvation and be led in the way of salvation.

See, he's here. He's in the far country. He's dying. He's without friends. He's without a future. And in fact, he's without hope.

And so, that's when the Holy Spirit came and brought him to his senses and brought him to see that there was another way, that there is another way for all those who are outside Christ Jesus.

And so, in coming to his senses, there came an honest evaluation of who he was and what he'd become and the sin in which he was living.

And he says, I have sinned against heaven and before you. This is the speech he's practicing in his own mind before he goes home.

[27 : 24] I have sinned against heaven and before you and I'm not more worthy to be called your son. He didn't make excuses.

He didn't try and blame somebody else. That again is an evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in us all. Remember Adam and Eve.

Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent. But here the prodigal he confesses his sins. He's brought to see the reality of his desperate light.

He's brought to see his estrangement from God. He's brought to see the estrangement from his father. That everything is without hope unless he returns to his father.

And so finally he confesses his sins and he turns from them and immediately he makes a return to his father.

[28 : 26] But he has to do something. He's not just thinking about it. Not just saying words of repentance. He's actually got to do something.

He's got to get on his feet and put one foot in front of the other until he comes home to his father and there to receive that welcome.

he needed to go. He needed to make that journey from where he was to where he wanted to be. That's the same for all of us.

We need to make a journey from where perhaps we are spiritually to where Christ wants us to be. in the terms of the experience of Jacob wrestling with the man there at Peniel.

God reminded him of the man he wanted him to be. He told him of his treasures that he had in God.

[29 : 33] He told him of the new name that he had with God. He told him of the future he had with God and that God does to us as he brings us to himself. He reveals to us the treasures that are in salvation.

He brings us to see and delight in what he's prepared for us. The joy that there is in Christ Jesus and the mercy that accompanies that joy.

But just very briefly as we come here to this last sad episode of the elder brother. The outcome of the prodigal returning home to his father resulted as we read in a great feast and great celebrations.

But there was one person who was not celebrating. He was working in the field as he'd always done. And he arrived home to hear music and dancing and rejoicing.

when he found out what was happening he was absolutely furious. When his father came out and begged him to come in he refused.

[30 : 44] He said all these years I've been slaving for you. I've done everything you ever asked me to do and you didn't even give me a little goat, a young goat to share with my friends.

But when this son of yours see the phraseology when this son of yours is no longer his brother he hates and despises him so much.

This son of yours when he comes home a drunkard one who slept with prostitute comes home you killed for him the fattened calf. You know it's easy to sympathize with the elder brother since maybe we're so much like him.

Time serving obeying and expecting to receive some reward for our obedience and our faithfulness.

We imagine we're not like the prodigal but that we're faithful and obedient. but we're not.

[31 : 58] See the two brothers are very like each other. There was no real love in their hearts at the beginning for their father. One showed it in his despising his father and the home life and going away.

The other one showed it in the life that he lived doing things out of duty doing things out of expecting the reward that was going to be his and not really out of love.

The problem for the elder son was that he was somebody who was very interested in property and possessions and all that he had.

He would have been perfectly content for his younger brother to have been lost and for the money to come home.

and he was angry because he had long since given up on him. As I said, even calling the prodigal this son of yours.

[33 : 07] Some of you, I suppose, are studying the book. The name slips me just now on Tuesday night. And he wrote a book called The Prodigal Son.

And in that book, he tells a story about a man called Seliri. And this man was a gifted musician.

he was someone who had been given a great gift from God and he prayed this very devout prayer to God.

He asked God, he said, God, I want you to bless me. I want you to make me famous for your glory and for mine. I want you to make my memory immortal.

I want people to remember me even after I've died. And as you do that, so I will live my life for the poor.

[34 : 14] I will help the poor. I will give to the poor. I will sustain them with all that I will receive by my life and by what I've done.

The name I was looking for, by the way, was Tim Keller. And as he tells the story, he tells a story written by a man called Schaefer. Schaefer. And it's about Amadeus Mozart.

Now as long as the Leraï was continuing with his good work and God was blessing him and causing him to prosper, he went on in the same way. But suddenly a new name appears on the scene.

And this name is Mozart. The name Amadeus, of course, means beloved of God. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. And he was a man who had prodigious talent.

He became far more famous than Silerai, was far more loved by the people, even though he was somebody who was godless, who lived a very dissolute life, someone who had no fear of God in him.

[35 : 24] And yet he was given this great gift. And Silerai couldn't understand why he was given this gift and it wasn't given to him.

And so he goes to God and say, almost in anger, I've lived my life for you. I've given to the poor, I've lived my life for those who are less fortunate than me, and yet you've given this gift to him and not to me.

From now on you're my enemy. And that's a very similar way. It's what is being displayed here in this parable.

And as I said, this came from the book that Tim Keller wrote about the prodigal son. And he's saying this is the attitude of the elder brother. We only do things because somehow we feel we're going to get some sort of reward or kudos or fame out of the things that we do.

And that's not real love. love. That's not real passion for our Lord Jesus Christ. It's doing things because we expect a reward. And so that's the real lesson here as we come to the end of this short study.

[36 : 46] See, the Lord spoke to the scribes and Pharisees who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down upon others.

And as we close here, we have to ask that question for ourselves. Why are we living the Christian life? Why are we doing the things that we do?

Is it because we do love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength? Or is it we're living out our lives here because we're expecting the some sort of reward at the end of it because of what we've done and how we've lived and what our reputation here is.

Let us then close our worship singing to God's praise in Psalm 89. Psalm 89 at Scottish Psalter on page 344.

God's mercies I will ever sing. With my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all. To the other verse marked five, that's five stanzas to God's praise.

[37 : 58] God's mercy I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness eleventh year wah endure thy faithfulness in the heavens thou wilt establish you I with my chosen one have made a covenant graciously and to my servant whom I love to David sworn have I that I thy seed establish shall forever to remain and will to generations all thy throne build and maintain the praises of thy wonder

Lord the heavens shall express and and in the congregation of saints thy faithfulness and now may grace mercy and peace in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit one God rest on you and abide in you now and always amen just one reminder for next for next are her are going to her