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# Parables: Concern for the Lost

By Bryan Hodge

“Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave.” - Fannie Crosby  
“Lead me to some soul today; O teach me, Lord, just what to say; Friends of mine are lost in sin, and cannot find their way.” -Will Houghton

“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost” (Luke 19:10).

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.” (Galatians 6:1).

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

Jesus set forth three parables that we will classify as ‘Concern for the Lost’ parables. Let’s notice...

## **The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4-7)**

The setting (15:1-3): The Pharisees and Scribes could not understand why Jesus would spend time with sinners. This was not the first time such troubled them (cf. 5:29-32).

The Parable (15:4-7): If a shepherd lost one of his sheep, wouldn’t he search for it? Wouldn’t he rejoice, if he found it and was able to bring it home? This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If one would do such for a sheep, what about a man? Isn’t a man’s soul worth far more than a sheep? (cf. 13:15-16; 14:1-5).

The Application: (1) The immediate application is that this explains why Jesus spent time with sinners. He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). (2) The secondary application is that we too should be concerned for the lost (cf. Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). J.W. McGarvey has written, “What can be the meaning of this parable, unless... faithful brethren are to go and hunt up, and try to win back, the wanderer? If a congregation were assembled on the Lord’s day for worship, and the elders, upon looking over their faces, were to miss one, and ascertain that he was absent in some gay company, or at home in an ill humor, or about to start out for the day on a pleasure excursion, would they be pressing the teaching of this parable too far, should one of the immediately leave the house of God, and go bring in that person? How much joy it would create among the saints on earth, and among the angels in heaven, if such a thing were done successfully and often; should anyone, however, be unwilling to press the analogy to this extent, he must still admit that the nearest possible approach to this degree of vigilance can along meet fully the demands of the shepherd’s duty” (The Eldership, p. 34-35).

## **The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)**

The setting (15:1-3): This is the same context as the previous parable. Jesus ate and associated with all types of people: (1) Pharisees (7:36-50; 11:37-44; 14:1-4); (2) Publicans and sinners (5:29-30; 15:1-2);

19:1-ff). He explained, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (5:31-32).

The parable (15:8-10): If a woman lost a silver coin, wouldn't she make an effort to find it? Wouldn't she rejoice, if she did find it? Neil Lightfoot makes this comment, “Some scholars have suggested that in this case the coin was especially valuable to the woman since it formed an ornament for her head. It was customary for Jewish women to save up 10 coins and string them together for a necklace or hairdresser. The ornament became a treasured possession worn as a sign of a married woman, very much like a wedding band is worn today.” (The Parables of Jesus, Part II). Wayne Jackson also comments, “Silver coins, which were commonly worn as ornaments by near-eastern women, were highly valued, frequently being handed down from mother to daughter” (The Parables in Profile, pp. 42-43).

The Application: (1) Jesus cares about the lost. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (15:10). (2) We too should care. “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

### **The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32)**

The setting (15:1-3): The context is the same as the two previous parables.

The parable (15:11-32): The parable is of a lost son and a father's love. In the words of George Strait's song, “Daddies don't just love their children every now and then. It's a love without end, amen.”

There is a difference between this parable and the two previous. In the case of the Lost Sheep there was a search and rescue. Sheep are near-sighted. It is very easy for them to wander off and not be able to find their way back home. In the case of the lost coin there was a search and find. The coin did not know it was lost. However, with the lost son, there is no search. The father knew where the son was. He was where he was by choice, and he knew the way home. It would have done no good to hog-tie him and bring him home. The son needed to come to himself, and decide that he wanted to return.

The Application: (1) God is ready and willing to receive the sinner who repents. (2) The real emphasis is upon the elder son, who was not ready to receive the sinner back home. The father told the elder son, “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” (15:32).