

The Lost Sheep, Coin, and Son

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A lot of things we could say, but I have some things that are on my heart this morning. The last time we were with Leonard Ravenhill - Leonard and Martha down in Texas - he shared a lot of things, but he shared one thing just out of the clear blue sky, and said Luke 15 and the lost sheep and lost coin and lost son. He says these are not three different parables, but they're just one. And maybe you've heard this already, but then he said this, we dare not separate them. And we dare not change the order. And that's all he said. That's all he said.

But through the years, my heart's been drawn to that statement. If we could turn in our Bibles this morning to Luke, the 15th chapter. And we'll read this. "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

I think these two verses are very significant to the parables here. He's talking to two classes of people. Probably His disciples are there too, but He's talking to sinners and He's talking to self-righteous people. "And He spake this parable unto them, saying, what man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, 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 repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

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 falleth 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's 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. Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive

again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. (V. 32) It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

Father, by Thy Spirit I pray, that You would quicken Your Word to our hearts this morning. We ask Thee Father, by Thy Spirit, to speak to each one of us. We'll praise You and thank You in Jesus' name.

As I meditated on these things, I'd like to share first of all from the middle one. The lost coin. First of all, I think we need to see this from not the standpoint of the son, the sheep, and the coin, but from heaven's standpoint. Look what it says here in verse 6. "Joy in heaven." And then in verse 10, "joy in the presence of the angels of God." And then joy in the Father's house. We look at so many of these things just from the human standpoint, from our standpoint, but I want us to think of this from heaven's standpoint. Beloved, we don't know how much we mean to God. If you're out here this morning and you don't know Jesus, you don't have any idea how much joy you're robbing the Father of. The reason I would like to look at this here lost coin first of all is because if I understand it rightly, this is where grace finds us. Paul said to the Ephesians, "and you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." How dead? As dead as a lost coin. How helpless? How hopeless? Of ever finding your way back to God? You're as dead as a coin. Every one of us. That's where grace finds us. "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." In John, Jesus said, "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." Do you believe that?

What I want to share this morning is to do two things: I want, and if I know my heart, I am longing to go home and be with the Lord. I would love for the Lord to come. I wish it would be first. But I tell you, I want to stay down here just as long as I can for two reasons. I want to stay down here to talk to God about men. And I want to stay down here to talk to men about God. I don't want to come to the ground... There's a wonderful promise, and I ask you to pray with me: "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." And another time David said, "Let me not go hence till I've shown Thy power to this generation." (unintelligible) There's some wonderful promises and I don't want to get sidetracked here, but it says the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple. I'm looking for that, beloved. Again and again and again. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind. Oh! To see that every time we gather together - suddenly! And when He is come, He'll reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

But here we are as where grace finds us. Dead. Now how did we get that way? How did we get this way: dead? How did we ever get dead in trespasses and sins? We have to go back to the first one, don't we. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one turned to his own way. And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Brother Conrad made a statement one time. He said that all the great truths of Scripture are in latent form of the first few chapters of Genesis. That's a tremendous statement. But remember what our first parents - I wish we could take time to do this. Well, let's go back to Genesis, can we? To Genesis the second chapter. One of the burdens of my heart here this morning is that we would understand this word: repentance. And we'll never understand the real meaning of repentance unless we understand the word sin. Because that's what we'll repent of. So there's joy in heaven, there's joy in the presence of God over one sinner (that repents).

Now in Genesis the second chapter. We'll just break in chapter 2:16. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And when the Lord met them in the garden after they had sinned, it says - in chapter 3 now and verse 8, "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves..." They had made themselves aprons. They knew they were naked. They'd made themselves aprons. But they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam and to his wife Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. And then I want us to get verse 11. "And he said who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" What was their sin? We could say unbelief. I want to put it this way: They took themselves out from under the authority of their Creator. What's repentance? Repentance is putting ourselves back under the authority of our Creator. But that alone won't do it. They took themselves out and now they're dead. Beloved, if the Lord God wouldn't have come down, in that state, they'd still be dead forever. But the Lord came down and He did something. Now I know some of you, you've thought of this a long time ago, but I confess, it says in the end of this chapter, well, verse 21, "Unto Adam and also unto his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and did clothe them."

I'd like to ask you this question this morning here. Do you think that the Lord said, after He'd encountered them and talked to them about their disobedience, do you think He said, now I want you to wait here for a little bit? I'll be back. And you think He went out and behind their backs took a lamb and killed it? Shed its blood and then brought it back? Or do you think He did it right before their eyes? What do you think would have made the greatest impression on them? (unintelligible) In Galatians, it says this: Before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been eminently set forth crucified among you. It's my belief, dear beloved, that probably the Lord took a lamb - an innocent lamb - shed its blood right in front of their eyes. Oh, there was a great truth to be taught, that without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness. Maybe this will put significance in that verse: "By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." By faith - which very clearly indicates there was some previous instruction of what to do.

Let me break in right here and bring another verse into light. Can I? Turn to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 11. In verse 20, Jesus said, (this is Matthew 11), it says then began the Lord to upbraid the cities where most of His mighty works were done, even saying that if the works that had been done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained. V. 24, "It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for thee." What does that mean? I don't know what that means. I don't know what that means. But I believe what it says. But here's the verse I want us to get. V. 25, "At that time..." At that time, when He had told them, it was going to be more tolerable - at that time, when He said woe to you, cities - "At that time..." I want us to get this carefully now. Mark this in your Bible. "At that time, Jesus answered and said, 'I thank Thee, O Father...'" Put it in the Zupke translation: Father, there's something on My heart that I want to thank You for. Oh, I want us to get this, beloved. "At that time, Jesus answered and said, 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes.'" Oh, beloved, let's get a

hold of that! Do we realize this? "I thank You, Father, that You hide these things from some, and You reveal them to others." I want that to affect my life. I want that to affect my prayer life. I want that to affect the way I'm talking to men. Oh, Father, I thank You that You hide these things from the wise and prudent and reveal them unto babes.

Can I give you a picture of a babe? Have you got your Redemption Hymnal there? Turn to page 341, would you with me? Oh, the song reader gives some words that depicts some of this dead, or in this sense, someone that's a babe. Begin in verse 2. "Not the labor of my hands." Verse 3: "Nothing in my hands I bring." How does a babe come into this world? Nothing! Nothing in his hands. Naked. "Come to Thee for dress..." Helpless. Now, that's a picture, beloved, if I understand the Bible rightly, when He's talking this lost coin is the same thing as the babe. Just as helpless. Just as hopeless. But God hides these things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes. I don't know how to say this, but if you're here this morning without Jesus, could you ask Him to make you a babe? To give you the heart of a babe. I shouldn't say this here... (unintelligible) foul. If a baby needs a diaper change, well, it smells that way at least, doesn't it? What can they do about it? What can a babe do about it? Nothing! Nothing! It's as good as dead. Can't do anything unless God does something.

Let's go back to Luke, the 15th chapter, shall we. The lost son. He says, "Father, give me the portion of goods..." V. 13, "He wasted his substance with riotous living." I want to submit to you, brethren, that's a sin to waste your substance in riotous living. It's a terrible thing. But I want to tell you, beloved, where it began. This son took himself out from under his father's authority. That's where it began. He took himself out from under his father's authority. And that's sin. And that has to be repented of. Repentance is putting ourselves (unintelligible) Repentance is putting ourselves back under His authority. If you're marking down quotes in your Bibles, I'd like you to write down this quote by John Calvin. John Calvin says, "We're saved by faith alone, but faith that saves is not alone." Oh, beloved, you'll never find more truer words than that. We're saved by faith alone, but faith that saves is not alone. Verse 17, it says he came to himself. Verse 18 - faith that saves says, "I will arise." Faith that saves says, "I'll go to my Father." Faith that saves says, "I have sinned!" Faith that saves says, "I am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Faith that saves says, "Make me as one of the hired servants." What's he doing? He's putting himself back under the authority of his father. Oh, beloved, the Word of God is clear: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And I want us to know, beloved, that repentance is not a one time act. Repentance is entering into a way of life. I think I want to share this with you. In this matter of being a babe, it wasn't just that one time I saw myself as a babe. I see myself that way all the time. I see myself helpless. I see myself naked. I see myself foul. What do I do? What do I do? By faith I come to Him. Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, find grace to help in time of need.

Here we are, beloved. We're all eternity bound this morning. Where does this find you? Where does this lost sheep, this lost coin, this lost son - where does it find you this morning? We need two things: We need forgiveness and we need repentance. Repentance towards God. Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. A life of faith. A life of repentance.

I think I'll close. Let's bow our heads. Father, thank You for Your Word. You said the entrance of Your Word giveth light, giveth understanding to the simple. Father, Father, I pray that Your Word will find each one here this morning. Oh God... Let everyone of us here see

ourselves as a babe. Not initially, but daily. Daily in need of You. Daily in need of You. Oh, we pray for our sons and our daughters. Oh, Father, open our eyes. Open eyes that we might see. We're totally and utterly at the mercy of God. So we cry to Thee for mercy, for ourselves, for our families, for the church, for our neighbors. Just breathe upon us today, Breath of God. We'll praise You. Make Thy Word quick and powerful today. Sanctify us through Thy truth. Thy Word is truth. We'll praise You, Father, for Your faithfulness, in Jesus' name, Amen.