

Luke 15:1-10

**Introduction:** Luke shares with Theophilus a trilogy of parables emphasizing God's desire to find and rejoice over the lost sinner who repents. This stands along side of, yet also in contrast to, His recent teaching on the cost of discipleship. If I forsake all and follow Him, will He welcome me?

- 1) The setting—15:1-2 (NB the play on word sounds)
  - a) Jesus' accessibility results in a seemingly joyful occasion—15:1 <sup>1</sup> *Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming to [ἐγγίζω] Him to listen to Him.*
    - i) They sense that Jesus cares for them and has something to say to them. (Bock)
  - b) Jesus' accessibility results in the religious killjoys expressing their dissatisfaction—15:2 <sup>2</sup> *And the Pharisees and scholars (the Law experts) were complaining [διαγογγύζω], saying, "This man welcomes [προσδέχομαι] sinners and eats with them."*
    - i) We've seen this before in 5:30 and 7:39.
    - ii) They speak the truth, but they don't agree with the Truth.
    - iii) The Pharisees totally lacked the loving concern of Jesus which the tax-gatherers and sinners found so appealing. They lacked the loving heart of the Father and a readiness to receive one who repents. (Thomas)
    - iv) They had isolated themselves from religious reality and had forgotten God's mercy toward those who were far from Him! (Couch)
    - v) Bock reminds us that Jesus is interested in befriending such undesirables, regardless of what others may think. His rationale is simple: He wishes to draw them to God.
- 2) Jesus responds to their complaining—15:3-10 <sup>3</sup> *So He told a parable to them, saying,*
  - a) The audience?
    - i) It must include the Pharisees and scholars who were complaining
    - ii) It may also include the tax collectors and sinners who were coming to him
    - iii) Jesus primarily rebukes the Pharisees, while at the same time also expressing God's joy at the repentance of the tax collectors and sinners He is seeking. (Magill)
  - b) Modest farmer—15:4-7
    - i) His desperate circumstances—15:4a <sup>4</sup> *"What man of you<sup>pl</sup>, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them,*
      - (1) It was not uncommon to run up to 200 sheep in one's pasture. 300 was considered a large flock. Thus, this is 1/100 of his total. Cf. the percentage of the woman's loss in 15:8 (1/10) and in 15:24 (1/2).
    - ii) His desperate effort—15:4b *does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?* (assumed response of "Yes")

- (1) This pictures God's love in Christ pursuing sinners
- iii) His natural, shared responses of joy—15:5-6
- (1) Naturally—<sup>5</sup> *And when he has found it, he places it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*
- (a) Imagine the difficulty of carrying this sheep all the way home!
- (2) Socially—<sup>6</sup> *And when he comes home, he calls together the friends and the neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!'*
- (a) A celebration with people he enjoys (friends) and with people he simply knows (the neighbors). IOW, some friends may not be neighbors and some neighbors may not be friends.
- (b) These people were obligated by the Law to assist him (Exodus 23:4-5; Deuteronomy 22:1-4).
- iv) The point of the parable—15:7 <sup>7</sup> *I tell you<sup>pl</sup> that, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven (referring to God indirectly, as was common) over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous who have no need of repentance.*
- (1) God rejoices when sinful people repent.
- (a) The joy that accompanies such a return should match the joy of heaven and should be present in all who see it happen. (Bock)
- (2) God does **not** rejoice when sinful people refuse to acknowledge their need for repentance when they assume that they themselves are already righteous.
- (a) Those who recognize where they stand before God and respond accordingly are the cause of great joy in heaven. (Bock)
- c) Modest homemaker—15:8-10
- i) Her desperate circumstances—15:8a <sup>8</sup> *Or what woman, if she has ten drachmas (a Greek coin equal to a Roman denarius; worth @ 2 week's income for the average person) and loses one drachma (1/10 of her total; 1 day's income; the price of one sheep),*
- ii) Her desperate efforts—15:8b *does not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?* (assumed response of "Yes")
- iii) Her natural, shared responses of joy with people of her own gender—15:9 <sup>9</sup> *And when she has found it, she calls the female friends and the female neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found the drachma that I had lost.'*
- (1) A celebration with people she enjoys (friends) and with people she simply knows (the neighbors). IOW, some friends may not be neighbors and some neighbors may not be friends.
- iv) The point of the parable—15:10 <sup>10</sup> *In the same way, I tell you<sup>pl</sup>, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God (referring to God indirectly, as was common) over one sinner who repents."*
- (1) God rejoices when sinful people repent.

(2) God does not rejoice when sinful people refuse to acknowledge their need for repentance when they assume that they themselves are already righteous.

3) Principles (primarily Bock)

- a) God has not abandoned sinners. He desires for them to be drawn to Him.
- b) God goes to great effort and rejoices with great joy to find and restore a sinner to Himself. He is a God who searches, finds, and cares for the sinner.
- c) The way to God is through the door of repentance and faith.
  - i) J. C. Ryle reminds us, that no matter how wicked a man may have been, in the day that he really turns from his wickedness and comes to God by Christ, God is well-pleased. Don't be afraid or ashamed to repent.

**Take-home truth:** God's arms are open to all who will seek Him on His terms. He is the Seeker, as Jesus told the woman at Jacob's well (John 4:23). He takes the initiative.