

“Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son” - Lesson #23 (Mark Smith)

Introduction

- This set of stories is *culturally* flabbergasting!
- This is the only time in Scripture where Jesus tells three stories in ONE parable
- The goal is to dramatically emphasize some essential truths about God to His audience.
- Truths that were revolutionary to them.
 - what God is like
 - understand the heart of the Father

PARABLE - comes from Greek work which means ‘to place alongside’ or ‘to lay alongside’. It is a comparison story that places a known truth alongside an unknown truth to enable the hearer to learn new truth. Parables have been referred to as windows or mirrors.

As *windows* they help us see God

As *mirrors* they help us see ourselves

CONTEXT

1. Jesus ministered in a Middle-Eastern peasant culture.

- Everyone, no matter their status, had their roots in peasantry
- Peasant customs were known to all
- These customs were went virtually unchanged through the years

2. Jesus addressed these stories primarily to the Pharisees and Scribes. Both groups were very highly motivated religious people.

Scribes: professional theologians, ecclesiastical lawyers, their purpose was to protect the Law of God

Pharisees: devoted lay-leaders who committed their lives to obeying the Law (all 631 regulations set up around God’s Law)

3. Tax Collectors were Jews who collaborated with Rome.

- They bought an area from Rome and ‘farmed’ it for what they could extract from their people
- The norm was that these were corrupt and unscrupulous men
- By public morality standards they were unclean, law-breaking sinners and seen in the same category as adulterers and Gentiles.

TEXT

A. Verses 1-2: Jesus welcomes sinners

1. That Jesus, who claimed to be one with the Father, ‘received’ (welcomed) sinners as brothers. This was a flabbergasting idea to the Scribes and Pharisees.

2. There are two Greek words for ‘welcome’. One indicates a willingness to sit down and talk. The other indicates a ‘welcome into fellowship’ type acceptance. It is a family type welcome. It is a second word that the Scribes and Pharisees said Jesus was doing. Jesus was defaming God’s reputation, according to them.

B. Verses 1-2: Jesus eats with sinners

1. Eating a meal together has great significance in the Middle-East. Doing this implies to all that you are giving total acceptance and conferring a blessing.

2. This act, by cultural norms, would have brought shame on Jesus and on the Father, who Jesus said He represented. Thus the anger of the religious leaders.

C. Verses 1-2: Murmuring leaders

The word for murmur used there is only used twice in the New Testament. The prefix on the word makes it have extra strength. These religious leaders were murmuring through the crowd and stirring up a public undercurrent of discontent and disapproval. This is why Jesus addressed

primarily the Scribes and Pharisees.

D. Verse 5: Rescued Sheep

1. The shepherd risks much to locate the lost sheep
2. The joyfulness and tenderness in finding it
3. The sheep is not involved in effecting its rescue/salvation

*Early picture of the Father - His genuine love and concern for the lost. His willingness to risk much for the lost. His joy at finding the lost.

E. Verses 6-7 Celebration

Jesus uses subtle humor here. The pharisaic commentary on the OT Law read - "*There is joy before God when those who provoke Him perish from the world.*" Thus, Jesus' words in verse 7

F. Verses 8-10: Lost Coin

1. Middle-Eastern women carried their money one of two ways: as part of a chain on her neck or in a tightly knotted cloth.
2. Ten coins represented 10 days wages.
3. Typical home was mud floors with high, small windows for security reasons. There would have been many dark corners. Due to woman typically having limited access outside the home, she is sure the coin is in her home.
4. Associating the Father with a woman would further infuriate the Scribes and Pharisees.

G. Verse 12: My Share

1. This request would have been culturally unheard of. At the core, culturally, was a desire by the son that his dad would die. Inheritance issues were NEVER discussed. It was a culturally taboo topic.
2. The father's response was shocking. He gives a third of his estate rather than shunning and sending away his son. He gives a third of his estate rather than shunning and sending away his son.
3. The possession given this son would have been lands and building. The son would have to quickly turn these into cash for his journey.
4. Selling the family property was even worse when you know that there was also a clan right of ownership also on the property. The son was disowning both his father and his clan.

H. Verse 13: Far Country

1. Went to live among Gentiles and preferred them over his own people.
2. By rejecting his father and tribe, the villagers, at the boy's leaving, would have thrown nuts and grain in his path, signifying the crushed relationship between them. To stay in the village area would surely have resulted in the boy being beaten and starved by his tribesmen. This awaited him if he returned. (Deut. 21:18-21)

I. Verses 25-28: The Older Son

1. "Older" is the word 'presbuteros' and implies preserver of the customs. It was a title used for a village elder or high community status person.
2. He has been out working in his supervisory role when he comes to the house.
3. His reaction is that of anger. The younger son has brought shame and disgraced to the family and now the father is complicit in this shame.
4. Forgiveness, for the Jewish leaders, was possible and available only after punishment was inflicted and repayment was made. THEN one could be let back into the house. It was a performance based forgiveness, but the father is changing their forgiveness paradigm.

5. The older son's actions cause the father to endure public shame and humility a second time by going out to talk to the son. When the father left the house to see his older son, all the music would have stopped and the guests would have followed the father outside.

K. Unknown Conclusion

There are only two options for how this story could have ended.

1. The older son would repent, return to the house and join the celebration.
2. The older son would have picked up a stick and beat his father to death! As the 'presebuteros' son he would have to uphold tradition. The rabbis would have concurred with this act.

***EIGHT WEEKS AFTER THIS PARABLE, JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED.**

PARALLELS

Actors	Lost Sheep	Lost Coin	Lost Son
God	The Shepherd	The Woman	The Father
Sinners (irreligious)	Lost Sheep	Lost Coin	Younger Son
Sinners (religious)	99 Sheep	9 Coins	Older Son

THEMES

	Something valuable Is missing	Something valuable Is found	Celebration
Lost Sheep:	Missing Sheep Matters	Missing Sheep Found	vs. 5-6
Lost Coin:	Missing Coin Matters	Missing Coin Found	v. 9
Lost Sons:	Missing Sons Matter	Missing Son Found	Vs. 22-24

	LOST SHEEP	LOST COIN	LOST SON
Were lost in:	The wide wilderness	The House	Their hearts
Progression:	1 in 100	1 in 10	1 in 2