

FBC POWELL, 11-13-16 AM NOTES
"WHEN HEAVEN REJOICES"
LUKE 15:1-24
Global Impact Conference

Matthew 16:18b "...I will build My church..."

Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Acts 1:8 "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Luke 15:7 "I tell you that in the same way, there will be **more joy** in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

Luke 15:10 "In the same way, I tell you, there is **joy** in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Luke 15:24 "'for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate."

Matthew 9:13b "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

I. There Is Rejoicing in Heaven When Lost Sheep Are Found (vv. 3-7)

Isaiah 53:6a "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way..."

John 10:14a "I am the good shepherd..."

Romans 3:11 "There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God."

2 Corinthians 5:20 "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Matthew 23:13 (NIV) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to."

II. There Is Rejoicing in Heaven Over a Lost Coin That Is Found (vv. 8-10)

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

John 20:21b "...as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

III. There Is Rejoicing in Heaven Over a Lost Son That Comes Home (vv. 11-24)

A. The Son Made a Selfish Request (vv. 11-12)

Genesis 3:5b “in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.”

B. The Son Walked Away in Rebellion (vv. 13-16)

Proverbs 13:15 (KJV) “the way of transgressors is hard.”

1 John 2:16b “... the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life...”

Luke 15:13b (NIV) “the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.”

Hebrews 11:25 “He [Moses] chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy **the fleeting pleasures of sin.**”

C. The Son Returned With Repentance (vv. 17-19)

“Repentance is God saying, ‘Attention, about face, forward, march!’”

—Ray Comfort

D. The Heart of the Father Was Revealed (vv. 20-24)

1 John 3:1 (NIV) “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”

Luke 15:24 (NIV) “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

First Baptist Church Powell 11 13 2016 AM

When Heaven Rejoices

Luke 15:1-24

Global Impact Conference Message

Allow me to bore you for a moment with some statistics that I find alarming and just downright scary. Attendance throughout the churches of our denomination has decreased by about 97,000 in the past two years. Membership has dropped by 200,000 during that same time. Since 1972 the churches in our denomination had a decrease in baptisms of almost 34%. In addition to these gloomy statistics, approximately 1,000 SBC churches close their doors every year.

Literally hundreds of books have been written seeking to explain this shameful decline. There are books that blame it all on Millennials (those born in 1985-2000), books that blame it on the culture, books that blame it on preachers, books that blame it on non-committed members, books that blame it on churches behind the times that refuse to use social media and oh so many more. In many of these books there are some helpful insights, but by and large they make it sound that building the church is all up to us and our methods. Jesus blows that reasoning up with five words in Matthew 16:18b: "... I will build My church..." That five-word statement is the only thing that keeps me from being depressed and enables me to look to the future with excitement and expectancy.

While it is Jesus who builds His church, He has given *us* the task of sharing the Gospel with those who don't know Him in our neighborhood and around the world. Our Lord promised us that when we get serious about sharing the Gospel and making disciples that He would do two things: First, He said He would be with us and second, He said He would empower us. Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

That's His presence with us; how about His power? Acts 1:8: "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." That leaves us without excuse.

We must stop blaming the Millennials, the culture, and the awful politicians. I remind you that the One who said, 2,000 years ago, that He would be "with us" and that He would "empower us" is the One spoken of in Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." He will still build His church if we will obey Him in the *going* and the *empowering*.

In this message, I want to deal with one of the most neglected *motivations* for going hard after the lost at any cost. When the lost come to Christ, God's joy is manifested for all Heaven to see. This is a forgotten motive for sharing the Gospel and making disciples. Seeing sinners saved causes our heavenly Father to rejoice! I am convicted that I don't focus enough on God's attribute of joy. God is love; God is omnipotent; God is holy; but don't forget that God is joyful! That joy is nowhere more evident than in Luke 15.

In Luke 15, Jesus gives three parables, and the common theme is this: When a sinner is saved there is rejoicing Heaven, and the most important One rejoicing is God Himself! Look at the following verses:

Luke 15:7: "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

Luke 15:10: "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

In Luke 15:24: we don't see the word *joy*, but that the Father in the parable is rejoicing is beyond question! "for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." That sounds like the outworking of joy to me!

The Pharisees and the scribes play an important part in Jesus giving these three parables (v 1-2). Let me explain some things about the Pharisees and the scribes that will make what Jesus is teaching more understandable. The scribes were the modern equivalent of lawyers. They revered the Scriptures and it was their task to see that they were copied accurately and interpreted correctly. They did an excellent job on the first of those tasks and a pitiful job on the second. The Old Testament Scriptures were copied accurately, but they lost their way when it came to interpreting the Scriptures.

The scribes were often aligned with the Pharisees. The Pharisees had a noble purpose early in their existence, but over time they deteriorated into a group that Dr. R. G. Lee described as "men in whom the milk of human kindness had curdled." They were started to counteract Israel's drift away from the law. They desired to bring people back to the law of God, but their zeal for the law turned into harsh, hateful legalism. They took The Ten Commandments and turned them into hundreds of rules and regulations covering the minutest things, especially things related to the keeping of the Sabbath. Instead of desiring to see sinners come into right relationship with God, they just hated the sinners because they did not put themselves under the Pharisees' man made rules and regulations. The Pharisees and scribes completely lost sight of the joy of God in seeing sinners coming to salvation.

It is interesting that the accusations the scribes and Pharisees unleashed against Jesus in verse 2 of the text were absolutely true. Luke 15:2: “Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’” Jesus Himself said in Matthew 9:13b: “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” By *righteous*, He was speaking of the arrogant *self-righteous* scribes and Pharisees. They had distorted the holiness of God to mean that He had no desire for sinners to be saved. They could not fit the seeking heart of the Lord Jesus into their perverted views of the holiness of God and the love of God.

To show the error of the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus told these three parables to illustrate the love of God for the lost and the joy of God in seeing a sinner come to Himself. In each of these parables there is something valuable that is lost – a sheep, a coin, and a son. That which was lost is found and the result is a great celebration and joy which pictures the heart of God and all of Heaven in response to lost sinners coming to Him. Let’s look at these three parables and see the consistent message in all three.

I. There Is Rejoicing in Heaven When Lost Sheep Are Found (v 3-7)

Before we get into the text, allow me to say a few things about parables. A parable was not meant to have every detail analyzed and then draw doctrines from these minor details in the story. In other words, you don’t approach a parable as you would the book of Romans. A parable is not a full outline of the truth. Basically, a parable is a story to illustrate usually just one main truth.

In this first parable, as in many other places, people are compared to sheep. That is not really a complement. You’ve heard of trained dogs, seals, and even pigs, but I doubt you’ve ever heard of a trained sheep. Sheep tend to stray. Isaiah 53:6a: “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way...” Sheep cannot protect themselves; sheep must have a shepherd. That is why Jesus says of Himself in John 10:14a: “I am the good shepherd...” Sheep desperately need the good shepherd!

I want you to notice in this parable the aggressiveness of the shepherd. A lost sheep does not find its way back on its own. Lost people do not find their way to God on their own. In reality, no one seeks after God on their own. Romans 3:11: “There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.”

The church, as the body of Christ on earth is expected to aggressively go after the lost sheep. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, Paul describes the heart of God for the lost as God’s heart moves His church. 2 Corinthians 5:20: “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

That sounds aggressive to me! We are the aggressors to go in Jesus’ name after lost sheep. I understand that one can be too aggressive in going after the lost, but the problem in most churches is a lack of needed aggressiveness. We tend to just ignore the straying sheep. I read about a study that interviewed people who were close by when someone drowned and the person interviewed didn’t help them. Do you know the most common answer to the question, “Why did you not help them?” It was, “We didn’t realize they were drowning; we just thought they were splashing in the water.” What an illustration of the church in America today! We do not have God’s heart of aggressiveness and urgency to reach the lost.

Notice in this parable the common theme that runs through all three of the parables. After being lost, sought, and found, there is rejoicing. There ought to be rejoicing in the church and there will be rejoicing in Heaven! When a lost sinner comes to salvation, there is rejoicing in Heaven, but no rejoicing can be found among the smug, spiritually blind, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. They saw no need for repentance and that is why Jesus said of them in Matthew 23:13 (NIV): “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”

From the parable of the lost sheep we see that God’s heart is to aggressively go after the lost and when the lost sheep is found, God is found rejoicing. One of our motives for seeking to win the lost to Christ is that we might give opportunity for the rejoicing of our Father.

II. There Is Rejoicing in Heaven over a Lost Coin That Is Found (v 8-10)

We are told in this parable of a woman who lost one of her ten silver coins. Each coin was probably a Roman denarius. A denarius was the average wage of a common laborer for one day's work. This was a significant loss for the woman. It was likely one of ten coins of the woman's dowry given as a wedding gift by her father. It is likely that she had the ten coins together and wore them around her neck. Perhaps the cord or pouch holding the coins broke and the coins were scattered. Since the typical home did not have windows it would have been necessary to light a lamp to find the coins even in the daytime. It seems that she quickly secured nine of the coins, but one was lost. When a quick look around the room did not reveal the coin, she began to sweep the packed dirt floor to find the valuable coin. The word translated "carefully" means to diligently search, to focus all her efforts on finding the coin. In the parable, the lost coin illustrates a lost soul. A lost coin is wasted. It was meant to be treasured or spent, but not lost. The purpose for our creation is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. However, those who are lost – dead in trespasses and sin, cannot magnify or enjoy Him. Like the woman searching for the lost coin, the Lord seeks the lost to bring them to their intended purpose.

If we truly desire to please the Lord, we will join Him in seeking the lost. There will be intensity in that seeking. In reality, we are simply joining our Lord in His work. Jesus said in Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." In John 20:21b: "...as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Notice the response when the lost coin was found. There was celebration and rejoicing that what was lost had been found. Jesus then makes the application in Luke 15:10: "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The scribes and Pharisees totally missed it! In their detesting of lost souls, they missed the joy that is found (notice carefully the description in verse 10) in the presence of the angels of God. The joy Jesus is referring to is the joy of the Father that fills Heaven and in which the angels and the redeemed saints share! Seeing the lost come to Christ gives God great joy! Like the woman in the parable, we are to go into the hard to reach places to seek the lost that our Father may rejoice in lost sinners who are brought to Him.

III. There Is Rejoicing in Heaven over a Lost Son That Comes Home (v 11-24)

The prodigal son is not the key character in this parable. The key character is the Father who pictures God Himself.

A. The Son Makes a Selfish Request (v 11-12)

The younger son's request was outrageous and heartless. This request was, in reality, the son saying to the father, "Let's pretend you are dead so I can receive my part of the inheritance now and not have to wait around for you to die." In other words, he treated his father as though he didn't exist. He wanted to run his own life.

This desire of the prodigal son goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had a loving Father who gave them all they could ever need and yet they rebelled. Their desire that led to their disobedience was not for a piece of fruit. Their real motive was detailed in Genesis 3:5b: "in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God." That is the root of all sin; we don't want God to run our lives; we want to run our own lives. The prodigal son was saying to the father, "Give me what I want now so that I can live where and how I want to live. This is just like the original rebellion and it is lived out in every natural born descendent of Adam.

B. The Son Walked Away in Rebellion (v 13-16)

Proverbs 13:15 (KJV): "the way of transgressors is hard." The prodigal son abandoned himself to what is called in 1 John 2:16b: "... the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life..." The summary statement of his actions is in Luke 15:13b (NIV): "the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living."

The "distant country" would have been in a Gentile region. The word translated "squandered" in verse 13 means to scatter. Through his evil lifestyle his entire inheritance was scattered or lost. Let's be honest;

there is temporal pleasure in sin, but listen to how long the pleasure lasts in Hebrews 11:25: “He [Moses] chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”

The pleasure in sin quickly vanishes. Just after the rebellious son loses all his inheritance, a severe famine comes to this Gentile land where he exists. Now for the first time, he begins “to be impoverished.” Now, just finding food becomes his highest priority. Verse 15 literally says that he “glued” himself to a Gentile. This was the most humiliating thing a Jewish man could do. He was bound to this Gentile in a beggar like relationship and was reduced to fighting with pigs for food. His dire situation was summarized in the last part of verse 16, “no one was giving anything to him.” This prodigal son pictures the hopeless and helpless plight of a sinner separated from God. He was at rock bottom without hope.

C. The Son Returned with Repentance (v 17-19)

U-Turns are allowed on the road to the pig pen, but unfortunately the prodigal son went all the way. In verses 17-19 we see the humble repentance of the prodigal son. Let me give you a caution. God often does a great work in life’s pigpens. One of the biggest mistakes parents and friends of prodigals make is to rescue the prodigal before he or she gets to the pigpen.

An important phrase in this parable is found in verse 17, “But when he came to his senses...” It literally means, “when he stopped being insane.” This is a picture of the breaking and convicting by the Holy Spirit that opens blinded eyes to see things as they really are.

In verses 18-19 we see what true granted repentance looks like. There were no demands, no excuses, and no self-justification. Ray Comfort describes repentance in military terms. He said that repentance is God saying, “Attention, about face, forward, march!” Excuses and justifications never accompany genuine repentance.

D. The Heart of the Father Is Revealed (v 20-24)

These verses give us as much insight into the heart of God as any verses in the Bible. The two main attributes we see are God’s love for the lost and God’s joy when a sinner truly repents. We see the Father’s love in His watching and waiting for His son to return. The Pharisees pictured God as one who would refuse to see His repentant son until restitution was made and he was humiliated. Not so! The loving Father was waiting and watching and as verse 20 says, had compassion for him and embraced Him and kissed him.

See not only His love, but also His joy. In the last part of verse 20, we see the Father running to His repentant son. The joy is uncontainable. Instead of unleashing his anger on the son, he throws a party, a joyous party. There was a robe put on the prodigal who returned. The robe was the garment of a son, not what the servant wore. The ring was a symbol of honor and authority. The shoes were, like the robe, reserved for sons, not the servants. Is it any wonder that the Apostle John seemed beside himself with joy when he said in 1 John 3:1 (NIV): “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”

God’s joy is a deep and mighty joy. Just as the shepherd rejoiced to find his sheep, and the woman rejoiced to find her lost coin, the Father rejoices to receive repentant sinners. Verse 24 is a good summary. Luke 15:24 (NIV): “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

Conclusion

How can we have a part in seeing Heaven rejoice? It is when we seek the lost like the lost sheep. It is when we aggressively go after the lost like the woman aggressively sought the lost coin. It is when we proclaim to the prodigals that there is a Father who loves them and who waits joyfully to forgive and receive them as sons.

Unless otherwise stated all Scripture quotations taken from the NASB (New American Standard Bible). www.lockman.org

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