

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Joy in Heaven over One Sinner Who Repents.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's gospel verse by verse and we find ourselves at **Luke 15:7**. Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word. We will back up to **verse 1** for context.

**Luke 15:1** Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. **2** And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." **3** So he told them this parable: **4** "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? **5** And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. **6** And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' **7** Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. **8** "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? **9** And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' **10** Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

You may be seated. Let's pray.

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Last week we looked at the first parable, the parable of the lost sheep, and this morning we will look at the second parable, the parable of the lost coin. A couple things to notice:

- The first parable dealt with a man and the second parable deals with a woman
  - The first parable dealt with losing one out of 100, or 1%, and the second parable deals with losing one out of 10, or 10%.
  - The value is increasing. One coin would be worth more than one sheep.
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Look with me at verse eight...

**Luke 15:8** "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?"

The silver coin is a drachma, which was a Greek coin roughly equivalent to the Roman denarius, which was equal to the pay for one day's labor.

When Jewish girls were married they received 10 silver coins as wedding gifts. Two commentators said they would wear the coins in a headband to show that they were married.

Losing one of these coins meant more than just the loss of financial value, because the coins also held sentimental value. It might be like losing one of the stones in your wedding ring.

Ancient houses were dark because they didn't have lights in them like we do. If this woman was going to find her lost coin, she was going to have to light a lamp to do so.

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Look at verse nine...

**Luke 15:9** And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'

Just as a woman would rejoice over a stone missing from her wedding ring, so too would a woman rejoice over finding one of her ten lost coins.

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But this parable this isn't primarily about a woman searching for and finding a lost coin. It is primarily about how hard Jesus works to find lost a sinner. He:

- Lights a lamp
- Sweeps the house
- Seeks diligently until finding him or her

We only need to think about him hanging on that cross to see the full length he would go to seek and save the lost.

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Just to make it abundantly clear that this parable is not primarily a physical story about a woman searching for a coin, look at **verse 10**...

**Luke 15:10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

Rejoicing over lost sinners is not something that is only important to people on earth. All of Heaven wants to see people saved.

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I want to draw your attention to something that I don't think would be initially obvious. Look back at verse 5...

**Luke 15:5 And when he has found it (the lost sheep), he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.**

This makes sense, doesn't it? The shepherd finds the lost sheep and rejoices.

But then look at the next verse...

**Luke 15:6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'**

Does this seem a little...extreme?

We understand him rejoicing...but calling together his friends and neighbors and telling them to rejoice because he found a lost sheep is pretty excessive. This is what we would expect for something major like a wedding or graduation.

And it's the same in verse nine...

**Luke 15:9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'**

Imagine a woman finds her lost wedding ring. She rejoices, but can you imagine her calling all her friends and neighbors and telling them to rejoice with her. This is what we might expect for a child that was missing and then returned...but for a lost coin?

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Do you remember last week I talked about Jesus using absurd, or exaggerated stories to make points?

For example, in the previous parable He described a Shepherd who would leave 99 sheep for one sheep. No shepherd would do that unless they were very foolish.

It's similar here: nobody would act this way over a lost sheep or a lost coin being found.

So why present such an absurd situation?

For the same reason Jesus always used hyperbole or absurd situations: to make a point.

And what would be the point?

To show the Lord's joy over lost sinners being saved...and this brings us to lesson one...

### Lesson One: The Lord rejoices over one sinner's salvation.

Notice it says **there is joy BEFORE THE ANGELS**. This isn't simply saying there's joy in heaven. I'm sure there is joy in heaven when a sinner repents, but this is talking about the joy of God Himself, because He's the One before the angels!

As we continue to prepare for The Exchange, one of the applications from these parables for our church is we should also rejoice over lost sinners who are found. To do so is to be like God.

There are two themes in these parables. The first is joy. The word joy or rejoice occurs five times in verses five through 10.

Have you ever wondered what brings God joy?

I'm sure:

- When we have marriages that reflect Christ and the church it brings God joy.
- When we raise our kids in the fear and admonition of the Lord it brings Him joy.
- When children obey and honor their parents it brings Him joy.

But it seems clear that one thing in Scripture brings God more joy than anything else, and that is lost sinners being saved.

Sadly, William Barclay said many of the religious people in Jesus's day had a saying...

*"There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who is obliterated before God."*

In other words, the thinking of the day – and it is not hard to believe considering the religious leaders' criticism of Jesus in verse two – was that the Lord rejoiced over people's condemnation.

So Jesus preached these parables to show the opposite is true.

In the account, notice the grumbling of the religious leaders is contrasted with the Lord's joy over lost sinners being saved:

- **Luke 15:2 The Pharisees and the scribes GRUMBLED, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."**
- **Luke 15:5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, REJOICING. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'REJOICE with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more JOY in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. 9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'REJOICE with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' 10 Just so, I tell you, there is JOY before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

There is complaining on earth but rejoicing in heaven over the same event. This shows how far the religious leaders were from the heart of God.

More than likely these parables also serve as subtle criticisms of the religious leaders. The shepherd and the woman call together their friends and neighbors to tell them to rejoice over the lost sheep and lost coin that are found, and the idea is the religious leaders should be rejoicing too...versus criticizing Jesus for finding and saving them.

Also, I want you to think about something...

The parable could talk about the shepherd finding lots of lost sheep, or the woman finding multiple lost coins. But instead, the emphasis is on one person:

- **Luke 15:4 “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost ONE OF THEM, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the ONE THAT IS LOST, until he finds it?”**
- **7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over ONE SINNER who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.**
- **8 “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses ONE coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?”**
- **10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over ONE SINNER who repents.”**

I wanted to draw attention to this, because with so many people in the world, and even more throughout human history, it is easy to feel like we are not very special to God. We are one of who knows how many other people who have been saved. So:

- Could our salvation really be that meaningful to God?
- Does God really care that much considering the number of other people who have been saved?

These parables answer that question. There’s joy in heaven, not just over the salvation of hundreds or thousands of people, but over one sinner who repents!

If you ever start to feel like you’re one of millions of Christians, and – therefore – you’re not important to the Lord, turn to **Luke 15** and see the joy He experienced when one sinner was saved...and consider that’s how He felt when you were saved!

We might not often think of God rejoicing, or experiencing joy, but we should, because this is far from the only place in Scripture that presents God this way. Let me show you a few other places.

Go ahead and mark your spot in Luke’s gospel and turn to **Matthew 25**. The parable of the talents is in verses 14 through 30.

We are probably familiar with this parable, so I don’t want to spend much time on it, but I do want to show you something that stands out to me.

The context is a man, who represents the Lord, goes on a journey and leaves people with talents, which represent the different gifts and abilities God gives us. He expects us to use the talents for His glory. When He returns, we will give an account of our faithfulness.

The first two servants were faithful and if you weren’t familiar with the account, what would you expect the master to say when rewarding them?

I would expect him to say, “**Enter into heaven,**” or even “**Enter into THE JOY of heaven.**”

Instead, look what he says...

- **Matthew 25:21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER.’**

- **Matthew 25:23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER.’**

Interestingly, their reward isn’t the joy they themselves will experience...although I am sure they will experience joy when they enter heaven. Their reward is experiencing the master’s joy with him. He said, “Come experience My joy with Me!”

Notice it is the master’s joy that they are offered. It is possessive. It is joy that belongs to the master. He experiences joy over their faithfulness, and He offers that joy to them as a reward.

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Listen to this beautiful verse...

**Isaiah 62:5 For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, SO SHALL YOUR GOD REJOICE OVER YOU.**

Aside from perhaps the way parents rejoice over their children, few things cause people to rejoice as much as a groom rejoices over his bride.

Yet this verse says that God rejoices over us the way that a groom rejoices over his bride. That is incredible!

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Next example...

**Zephaniah 3:17 The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; HE WILL REJOICE OVER YOU WITH GLADNESS; he will quiet you by his love; he will EXULT OVER YOU WITH LOUD SINGING.**

Sometimes we might be more likely to think of God being annoyed or irritated with us...versus rejoicing over us with gladness or exulting over us with loud singing.

We don’t often think of God singing, but He does – and He sings over His people. This is how much joy and delight God takes in us: He breaks into song!

That’s a pretty wild thought, isn’t it? God singing loudly over us!

Spurgeon said, *“Think of the great Jehovah singing! Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into a song: Father, Son and Holy Ghost together singing over the redeemed? God is so happy in the love which he bears to his people that he breaks the eternal silence, and sun and moon and stars with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy.”*

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Hopefully you see the relationship this has to outreach and evangelism. We want sinners to hear the gospel, repent, and believe, because not only does that mean people got saved, it also means God experiences joy.

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Now speaking of repentance, this brings us to the second theme in the parables.

Turn back to Luke 15:

- **Luke 15:7 Just so, I tell you, 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 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who REPENTS.”**

Lost sheep and lost coins find it impossible to repent, so Jesus added this so that both the religious leaders and the sinners who heard Him knew that repentance is important for lost people.

And this brings us to lesson two...

## Lesson Two: The Lord seeks and the sinner repents.

With this discussion of repentance we get to see some balance. This emphasizes man's responsibility.

If you remember last week's sermon we talked about Christ seeking and saving the lost. Christ is the initiator. We didn't talk about sheep doing anything to be found or being able to make their way back to their flock. Similarly, coins don't get up on their side and roll back to their owners.

But does this mean that we have no responsibility at all?

We are responsible to repent.

It's almost like Jesus is saying, "If you want to be saved, you repent when you are found."

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Look at verse seven again...

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

There are two ways to view the phrase **righteous persons who need no repentance**. One view is that it is rhetorical, such as in these verses...

**Luke 5:31 Jesus [said], "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."**

These verses shouldn't be understood as though there are some people who don't need a physician, or aren't sick, or don't need to repent, because they are healthy or righteous. Instead, Jesus is talking about people who **THINK** they are righteous and don't need to repent.

In that case, Jesus is talking about religious leaders who are criticizing Jesus for hanging out with sinners, because they don't think they are sinners.

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The other possibility is literal. They are **righteous people who...need no repentance**, because they already repented, are saved, and given Christ's righteousness. Jesus is not talking about self-righteous people. He's talking about people who are righteous people who need no repentance, because they have been imputed with Christ's righteousness and have already repented.

I lean toward this interpretation primarily because the 99 righteous people seem to be associated with the 99 sheep who are part of the flock, which means they are people who have repented and become believers.

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When we repent, we receive a new nature, and this brings us to lesson three...

## Lesson Three: We need a new nature versus more effort.

Listen to this story, and then I will share something with you about repentance...

There was a scorpion that wanted to cross a river, but it couldn't swim. So, it asked a turtle to carry it on its back. The turtle said, "Do you think I'm crazy? You will sting me while we are swimming and I will drown."

The scorpion responded, "If I stung and you drowned, I would drown with you. Where is the logic in that?"

The turtle said, "You're right, go ahead and hop on my back."

The scorpion climbed on the turtle's back and they began to cross the river. Halfway across, the scorpion stung the unsuspecting turtle. Sure enough, they began to drown. The turtle asked, "You said there was no logic in stinging me, so why did you do it?"

The scorpion said, "It has nothing to do with logic. It is just my nature."

The point is that the scorpion doesn't sting, because that's what it chose to do. The scorpion stings, because that's what's in its nature to do.

Scripture speaks similarly about us regarding sinning:

- We don't lie and become liars. We lie because we are liars.
- We don't steal and become thieves. We steal because we are thieves.
- We don't covet and become coveters. We covet because we are coveters.

We sin, because it is in our nature to do so. Literally. We have a sinful nature that we inherited from Adam.

**Job 15:14 What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?**

We want to think that if we try hard enough we can change. We can go from being impure to pure, from unrighteous to righteous. But this verse makes the point that we can't change because it is our nature to be sinful.

**Jeremiah 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil.**

Despite what the world says, we can't heal or cure ourselves. We have as much potential to change our sinful nature as an Ethiopian does of changing the color of his skin or a leopard does of changing his spots.

We can't put forth enough effort that we suddenly get rid of our sinful nature and become sinless.

So what is the solution?

The solution is repentance and turning to Christ. When we do that, He begins changing us. He gives us a new nature...

**2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

God's kind of change happens from the inside out. When our nature has changed, we begin to see actual changes in our lives.

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People have asked me how you can tell when people have repented. I used to say they have changed. But I wouldn't say that, or at least not just that, any longer, because Scripture is clear that people can change temporarily. I think about the parable of the unclean spirit that leaves the house and then returns.

Let me give you three characteristics of true repentance to look for in other people's lives and our lives:

1. First, earnestness to do what's right. "Earnestness" has to do with speed. When we have truly repented, we don't drag our feet making changes. We don't wait until next year to change. We focus on changing now.
2. Second, indignation toward sin. "Indignation" has to do with our attitude toward sin. When we have truly repented we are indignant toward sin, or we have a hostility toward our sin.
3. Third, time is necessary. We must see change that stands the test of time.

When we see these three elements, we can be confident in repentance and other people's lives and in our lives.

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Let me conclude by sharing three encouragements...

First, knowing how much God rejoices over our salvation should be a constant encouragement to us.

Second, seeing God's joy when sinners repent should motivate our evangelistic efforts. If we love the Lord, we are going to want to bring Him joy.

Third, if we're going to be like God, and He experiences joy when sinners repent, then we should experience that same joy when we see people saved.

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I will be up front after service, and if you have any questions about anything I've shared, or I can pray for you in any way I would consider it a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.