

The Amazing Love of Our Heavenly Father

Luke 15

Are you legalistic or judgmental? Perhaps you think God is like that. Is God an unforgiving and condemning father? Some theologians portray Him that way, but Jesus describes our heavenly Father as shockingly forgiving, tirelessly loving, and always ready to welcome us home!

Getting Three Parables All Wrong!

- *The “sinners” in Luke 15.2 are not unbelievers.*
- *They were common folk who broke the Pharisees’ rules.*
- *The lost sheep, coin, and son don’t refer to unsaved people.*

God’s Unwavering Love for His Children

- *What is ‘lost’ matters greatly to God!*
- *If we wander away from God, He loves us still.*
- *When we repent, God is waiting with open arms.*
- *Judgmental Christians are angry at the Father’s grace.*
- *God loves those who are ungracious, and gently calls them.*



1. The three parables in Luke 15, ‘The Lost Sheep,’ ‘The Lost Coin,’ and ‘The Prodigal Son,’ are all spoken by Jesus in response to the Pharisees and the scribes taking issue with Him. What upset these religious leaders? To them, a “sinner” (15.2) was a person who did not ‘follow the rules’ of their religious traditions. (For an example of this and Jesus’ response, see Matt. 15.1-9.) Many theologians today say that the “sinner” refers to a unbeliever. Why might they assume that? Read Mark 2.15: The ‘tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus,’ and ‘they were following Him’! If these people are ‘followers of Jesus,’ the fact that Pharisees call them ‘sinners’ certainly doesn’t mean they are unsaved!
2. Further evidence that these “sinners” are believers comes from the three parables. The sheep, coin, and son all belong to their owner (or father) *before they are lost*. The prodigal did not become a son after he repented – he was a son! Can a Christian wander off like a lost sheep? (See Ps. 119.176.) We know Jesus is concerned about those who have never believed in Him (Jn. 3.16, etc.); is Jesus also not concerned about those who believe in Him, then wander off?
3. All three of these parables have a common theme: *That which is lost matters to God!* This is especially true of His children who wander from their spiritual home (cf. Matt. 18.12-14). Jesus is illustrating the heart of our heavenly Father. Have you ever lost something that is very dear to you, perhaps even a child who wandered away from you at a fair or a mall? Can you sense the heart of our Father God as He seeks longingly for what is lost?
4. The stunning – dare I say ‘irrational’ love of God is on full display in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The father in the story represents God the Father. At the beginning, when the son rashly asks for his inheritance, what does the father do? How would this have affected the family name? After squandering his inheritance, coming home in shame a disgrace, what does the son expect? What does he get?! Who welcomes him home? Why does the older brother not share in the father’s joy? What does he fail to understand?