

Bi132 The Gospels I

Lesson Bi132-36 Jesus Reveals the Father

Jesus revealed many truths about the nature of God while here on earth. In fact he said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In his description of God, he almost always referred to him as my Father. He described himself as the “Son of Man” and a few times as “Son of God.” We who believe are called the sons and daughters of God. The pattern becomes clear. Even though our earthly family may be imperfect, God chose to describe himself with family relationship words that all people can grasp. God wants us to understand that we all can be a part of his spiritual family, through Jesus.

Now the tax collectors and sinners—like prostitutes and thieves—were all gathering to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law complained among themselves against him saying “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Then Jesus told them these parables:

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous who do not need to repent.

Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.” In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, “Father, give me my share of the estate.” So he divided his property between them.

Soon the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will return to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.” So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe for him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. He called a servant and asked him what was going on. “Your brother has come,” he replied, “and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.”

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, “All these years I’ve slaved for you and never disobeyed you. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!”

“My son,” the father said, “you are always with me. Everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Luke 15:1-32).

Notice the main character in each story. Who represents God the Father? The shepherd, the woman, and the prodigal’s father. With the lost sheep, God the good shepherd seeks out the lost one who is alone. In the parable of the lost coin, the woman represents God. She seeks out the lost coin which is still precious and important to her. She keeps looking for it until it is found. With the lost son, God is represented by the father. He patiently waits while the son discovers what it means to be lost. When the prodigal returns to his father, we see a picture of God welcoming a sinner.

The second son, who never left home, was also lost. He just didn’t know it. His lostness was the result of being out of relationship with the father. This older son, the law keeper, represented the religious Jews who had just criticized Jesus. They were the intended audience for these three stories. Jesus invited them through the story to see their lostness and repent before it was too late. In Jewish culture such an evil son would never be accepted back by the father. He would be treated as though he were dead for dishonoring his father and wasting his fortune. Yet Jesus wants the audience to know that God has a completely opposite view of the sinner.

Many of the details of these stories describe the heavenly Father. He constantly seeks for the lost. Though sinners consider him as dead in their own lives, he still works. He uses people and circumstances in their lives to draw them. When they decide to come to him, he is watching for them and welcomes their coming to faith. All that he does is focused on bringing the sinner to the place of peace with the Father.

The two sons represent two kinds of sinners. Some are openly rebellious and others are rebellious secretly. The first kind seeks pleasure and security in the wrong places and things. They seek travel, popularity, wild living and freedom from all restraint. The second type often experience a good life; wealth, family, and even honor among the religious. Like the older son, they outwardly keep God’s laws. They hope God will receive them based on their behavior. This also described the religious leaders, the intended audience of the parable. In the end, they are all out of relationship with their Father God.

The story ends with God's plea to the Pharisees and reflects God's great concern for all the lost. He says, "This brother of yours was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." These stories are all about the Father's great love for all the lost. He, through Jesus, is seeking sinners, who are dead because of their sin. The religious do not understand God's love that sent Jesus "to seek and to save" those who are lost (Luke 19:10).

This story is **important** because it contrasts the vast love of God for lost sinners with the exclusive attitude and self-righteous pride of the Pharisees. They had no love for the sinners and would not even eat with them.

The **main truth** of this story is that God is seeking people and desires for them to be found. As Christians we must reach out to the lost and form relationships with them to draw them to Christ.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did the younger son who left home plan to say when he returned to his father?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you answered he planned to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and you and I am no longer worthy to be called your son," you are correct.
2. What did the father say after his younger son returned home?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you answered the father said, "Let's celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found," you are correct.
3. Who did Jesus hope would believe in him after hearing this story of the two lost sons?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus hoped the Pharisees and the teachers of the law would believe in him, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the complete story and tell it to someone who does not know it. After you tell the story ask and discuss this question, "What does this parable tell us about the characteristics of the love of God the Father for the lost?"