

The Homecoming

“Parable of the Prodigal Son”



“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

There are three parables in Luke 15. They are similar in content, but each is unique in its approach to the same idea. The parable of the lost sheep tells how the shepherd goes out to hunt the sheep even though he had ninety-nine other ones. The parable of the lost coin tells how the woman sought the one coin that was missing and then called everyone together to celebrate with her. The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) tells how the son asked for his inheritance and then left on his own. The father did not chase after him. He allowed him to do “his thing” and then when he came home the father rejoiced with him. This is the only one that talks about the feelings of the son that remains at home. These are all talking about wandering away from God and then being found. I think Christ was talking to the crowd that included the Pharisees and tax collectors as well as other people. Christ was relating the same experience but in a different way each time hoping the message would reach the people.

Notice that the shepherd went after the sheep. The woman searched for the coin. The father did not chase after the son who wanted his inheritance right then. He allowed him to realize the problems of his decision but welcomed him when he returned with a great banquet. There are actually three important characters in this parable, the father, the son that wandered away and the son that stayed home. We will concentrate today on the son that wandered away and how that story ties in with the other two parables in the same chapter.

The son had known a great life. His father had many fields and perhaps that was part of the problem. The young man had much but wanted more. He wasn’t satisfied with how things were going and wanted to lead “the good life.”

Sometimes we want to think we can handle things on our own. The son that wandered knew that he had done wrong, so he swallowed his pride and went home. Sometimes we have to do the same thing. We have to ask forgiveness because we are all guilty of sin. When we do, the Lord is there waiting with the best robe, the ring and sandals, and a great banquet with the fatted calf. He will rejoice with us. (Luke 15:22) We have to be willing to admit we sin and need to accept the gifts of love and forgiveness.

I am reminded of a fire that has burned down. In the days of the wood or coal furnace, a person could take a bellows to the embers and blow life back into the fire for a short time. The flame burned again, but it had to be fed so the fire would catch with the new

coal or wood that was added. The Holy Spirit is always with us, but sometimes we need the bellows to rekindle our faith and then it needs to be fed. We can fuel our faith with prayer and Bible study. We can do it with fellowship with other Christians. We can do it through reaching out to help those who are in need. The Holy Spirit is always willing to help us, but we need to take action. Christ took the first step; the second step is our choice.

The three parables go together, yet each had its own lesson. The main characters all rejoiced when the lost was found. Each one had a sincere love feeling. Each item had a personal value, not just a monetary value. So we all have a real value to God. I believe He rejoices when we come home.

Remember “Footprints in the Sand” by Mary Stevenson. It is a story of the man on the beach who saw two sets of footprints and wondered why sometimes there was only one set of footprints. The answer was “The Lord replied, ‘The times when you have seen only one set of footprints, is when I carried you.’” What a wonderful promise.

Prayer: Thank You for being with us throughout our life. Thank You for the knowledge that even though we sin You will forgive us if we ask. Help us to keep the fire burning so we can witness for You to those in doubt and those who don’t know Your amazing love. Amen

1. Why do you think the son wanted his inheritance? How can we sometimes be like that son?
2. Why does God allow us to make wrong decisions?
3. What can help us through making decisions?
4. How can we rekindle our fire?

“Footprints in the Sand”

One night I had a dream--
I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord
and across the sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints,
one belonged to me and the other to the Lord.
When the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that many times along the path of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest
and saddest times in my life.
This really bothered me and I questioned the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,
you would walk with me all the way,
but I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life
there is only one set of footprints.
"I don't understand why in times when I needed you most,

you should leave me."
The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child,
I love you and I would never, never leave you
during your times of trial and suffering.
"When you saw only one set of footprints,
it was then that I carried you."

...Mary Stevenson

Parable of the Prodigal Son

"Then He said: 'A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'" Luke 15:11-32 KJV

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