

# Receiving sinners

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn to our reading in the Gospel according to Luke, in chapter 15. The Gospel according to Luke, in chapter 15 at the beginning.

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Now this chapter contains three well-known parables. The parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the parable of the lost son.

And perhaps the parable of the lost son, or the prodigal son, is the best known of all of the parables. And we have heard sermons, I'm sure, in the parable of the prodigal son.

And these sermons have taken the parable in isolation. We have taken the parable as it stood on its own. And there's great danger in this, as we will see.

[ 1 : 03 ] Because there are some people in the Church who would argue that the whole Gospel is contained in the parable of the prodigal son. But this parable is indeed the Gospel.

And they make God the universal Father, who received all erring sons back into his family. All you've got to do is to return to the Father, the Heavenly Father, and that's all that salvation is about. There's no mention, you see, about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no mention about the atonement in the parable of the prodigal son.

And there's no mention of the work of the Holy Spirit in that parable. There's no mention that the Holy Spirit is at work in the heart of that man who returned to his Father.

But why is that? Why is there no mention of these things in the parable of the prodigal son? Well, the reason for it is because they are mentioned in the preceding parable.

[ 2 : 15 ] And when you come to the parable of the prodigal son, you already know about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. Because they are mentioned in the two previous parables.

And what links all these parables together is the statement we have here at the beginning of the chapter. Verses 1 and 2 are like a text that is expounded.

And this text is expounded in the remainder of the chapter. And to see the background, you realize that Jesus had been teaching.

And he had been teaching certain things about the cost of being a disciple. What following him really meant. And he was giving really strong stuff to these people.

He was really laying it on a line, as it were. What it meant to be a disciple. What it meant to follow him. That's in the preceding chapter. And immediately after that, we read, Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners to hear him.

[ 3 : 26 ] The tax collectors and the sinners were all gathering to hear him. This man was a message. And who were all these people who were plotting, as it were, to hear Christ and to hear what he was saying?

Well, they were, first of all, publicans or tax collectors. These were the people who helped the Romans in their administration off the conquered territory of Palestine.

And these people enriched themselves at the expense of their fellow countrymen. And also, they were hated by the Jews. They were ostracized by many of the Jews.

And they were regarded as outcast by the religious people. By the Pharisees and the scribes. They were regarded as extortioners and praisers.

These publicans. These tax collectors. They were saved by the people. And who were the sinners? Well, the sinners were the people of a bad reputation.

[ 4 : 35 ] They were moral people. Either people who had been sinful and were sinful. Or people who followed up the oppression that the religious regarded as incompatible with the law.

And so it's these two groups of people. The tax collectors and the sinners. Who are coming to hear Jesus. And of course, the scribes and the Pharisees would have nothing to do with such people. To associate with such people, they would consider, was contaminating. To even associate with them, was something that was contaminating them.

And to eat with them, was outrageous. To dine with publicans and sinners, with tax collectors and sinners, was outrageous. Because you see it implied welcome and implied recognition.

And so these two groups commanded a censure of the scribes and Pharisees. But these two groups were the groups who were gathering round to hear Jesus.

[ 5 : 43 ] And in contrast to the Pharisees and the scribes, Jesus didn't mind associating with them. He was often to be seen in their company.

He even selected a tax collector to be one of his disciples. To be one of the twelve. And he dined with them. And he was in complete confidence then to the Pharisees and to the scribes.

Because he associated with these people. And he ate with them. And he was seen in their company. And of course that was fitting. Because we know that he came to help sinful men.

And he could not do this if he did not meet them. And if he did not associate with them. How could he help them unless he associated with them.

And he met them on their own level. And he met them where they were. And he met with them to do them good. He met with them in order to deliver them from their sinful ways.

[ 6 : 49 ] And the tax collectors and the sinners were not slow to recognize the difference between Jesus and the scribes and the Pharisees.

They saw how different Christ's attitude to them was. To that of the scribes and the Pharisees. They knew how unwelcome they were amongst the scribes and the Pharisees.

The scribes and Pharisees looked down their noses at them. They would have nothing to do with them. They rejected them. But here is Jesus. And he associates with them.

He dines with them. He speaks to them. And they know the difference. They know that Jesus has an interest in them. And has a concern for them.

They regarded Jesus as their friend. His teaching was uncompromising. There was an authority about his teaching. And yet they loved him.

[ 7 : 52 ] They loved him. They recognized that he was concerned for their good. They recognized that he was interested in them.

And therefore they gathered round him. And you see they didn't fit on a show like the Pharisees and the scribes. They weren't ashamed to call themselves sinners and tax collectors.

They recognized their true position. And they were not sitting on a show or putting on a face. They just recognized themselves for what they were.

And they came to Jesus. And they came to hear him. And they gathered round him. And what was the result of that? Well the result was that the Pharisees grumbled.

They grumbled at Jesus. They murmured at him. This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them. It could be translated.

[ 8 : 53 ] This fellow. That's what we call them. This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them. On a previous occasion they had come forth with his disciples.

For doing this very thing. For associating with the tax collectors. And the sinners. For dining with them.

But now they criticize Jesus himself. They go a step farther. They're even bolder. And they begin to criticize Jesus. This man receives sinners and eats with them.

This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them. And you see here we have the gospel. Out of the mouth of Christ's enemies.

How often that occurs in the New Testament. Especially of course in the gospel. The gospel spoken from the mouth of Christ's enemies. This is what they say.

[ 9 : 54 ] This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them. And of course that was true. Because Christ came to speak and to save the lost.

And I thought to say that he welcomes sinners and eats with them was true. They were stating a truth. They were stating it in the wrong way and in the wrong spirit.

But they were speaking a truth. But this fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them. And then I could wear to show how this was true.

How the attitude of Jesus was true. And how the attitude of the Pharisees was wrong. Jesus told this parable. And he spoke this parable unto them saying. And therefore the parable that he speaks. The three parables that he speaks at this time. Are first of all to expose the mistake of the Pharisees.

[ 10 : 55 ] To show how wrong the Pharisees were. And secondly to encourage these tax collectors and sinners. To show them that this is the position.

That this Jesus who is the son of God. And therefore God himself. Is someone who welcomes sinners and eats with them. And the Pharisees attitude is all wrong. It's not Christian. It's not right. These religious leaders were all wrong in their attitude to people. They were all wrong in their attitude to sinners.

To publicans. To tax collectors. And Jesus shows that. He exposes them in these parables. He exposes their attitude. And he shows that God the Father.

And he himself. And the Holy Spirit. Are those who are interested in the salvation of sinners. And the first thing we say about these parables.

[ 11 : 57 ] And we look at them in general today. Is that the three parables form a unity. They form a unity. And it's wrong to take any one parable out of context.

Because they are like a mute. Like three musical instruments. Each making a different sound. But playing the same tune. That's what we could say about these parables.

Three parables. Like three musical instruments. Each making a different sound. But all playing the same tune. And what is the tune?

What is the tune that is being played in these three parables? Well it's the yearning love of the Godhead. For the lost sinner. And the joy when the sinner is found.

It's the joy of the Godhead. In finding the lost sinner. And you'll see that note struck in all three parables. In the first parable.

[ 12 : 58 ] The parable of the lost sheep. When he found it. He lays it on his shoulders. Rejoicing. And when he comes home. He calls together. His friends and neighbors.

Saying unto them. Rejoice with me. For I have found my sheep. Which was lost. In the parable of the lost coin. The woman who lost the coin. When she has found it.

She calls her friends and her neighbors. Together saying. Rejoice with me. For I have found the peace. Which I have lost. And then in the parable of the lost son. The prodigal son.

There's the great welcome. That the father gives to the son. And then the great reception. He receives at home. They make a feast. And they begin.

To be eaten. To drink. And to be married. And there's the sheer joy. In all the parables. Of finding. A lost article.

[ 13 : 54 ] Or a lost son. There's this. Same theme. Running through all three parables. The joy of finding. And the basic lesson.

Is the same in all three. Man's misery in being lost. And God's joy in finding. God is seeking a sinner. And God rejoices.

When he finds a sinner. And this is revolutionary thinking. As far as the scribes and the Pharisees. Were concerned. Because the rabbis. Thought that God would worship him.

The penitent sinner. If he returned. But the idea that God himself. Is a seeking God. That God is seeking the sinner. And yearning over the sinner.

And longing for the sinner to return. It's not that God taking the initiative. That was altogether new to them. And this is what is so revolutionary.

[ 14 : 53 ] In Jesus thinking. And in what Jesus says. That God is actually yearning over sinners. Yearning over the lost. And he rejoices with exceeding joy.

When the lost are found. And when the lost are brought home. And that's the theme that goes through. All the three parables. And that's what makes them a unity. And we should never break that unity.

There's a unity in these parables. That speak to us. About the joy of God. In finding the lost sinner. And secondly.

We must say therefore. That these three parables. Are complimentary. They are complimentary. There's no reference. As we said already. To the work of the son.

In the parable. The work of Jesus Christ the son. In the parable. Of the lost son. And there's no reference. To the work of the Holy Spirit. In that parable.

[ 15 : 55 ] It would seem that in the parable. Of the prodigal son. That the son did everything himself. That he returned at his free will. And so on. But we know that's not true of sinners.

Sinners do not return. At their own free will. To the father. You will not come to me. That you might have life. Said Jesus. And so therefore.

If. We know from other parts of scripture. That the sinner. Left to himself. Will not return. To the father's house. But you see what the third parable is doing.

It's focusing. On the yearning. Love of the father. For the sinner. And his joy. In his returning. To the family house.

To his father's house. And it can afford to do that. Because Jesus has already spoken. In the previous two parables. About his own work of the shepherd.

[ 16 : 55 ] And about the work of the Holy Spirit. And you see. This chapter is telling us. In a marvelous way. About the work of the triune God.

In our salvation. It's a work of the triune God. Our salvation. Many people speak as if Jesus. Was doing it all.

They speak as if Jesus. Was trying to influence the father. To love us. But you see. The work of salvation. Is the grand work. Of the triune God.

The trinity. Are totally involved. In our salvation. The father is involved. In the loving. And in the planning. Of the salvation. The son is involved.

In the undertaking. Of the salvation. And the spirit. Is involved. In the applying. Of the salvation. And you see. The first parable. The parable.

[ 17 : 50 ] Of the lost sheep. Is speaking to us. Of the work. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. It brings in that image. Of the old testament. The image of the sheep.

And the shepherd. All we like sheep. Have gone astray. We have turned everyone. To his own way. And the Lord. Has laid on him. The iniquity of us all.

Jehovah. Was the shepherd. Of his people. Jesus is a good shepherd. Who lays down his life. For the sheep. And we are sheep. Who are wandering away.

From the fold. Willfully wandering. From God. And Jesus. Goes out. To look for us. And to bring us back. And that's the work. Of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the first parable. And in the second parable. We have the work. Of the Holy Spirit. Because of this woman. Who has lost her coin. And she goes.

[ 18 : 45 ] To seek for his coin. Until she finds it. But you see. The thing about the coin. As distinct from the sun. And as distinct from the sheep. Is that the coin.

Is a lifeless thing. And it's a nought illustration. Of the sinner. Who is dead. In trespasses and sins. He's incapable. Of saving himself.

He's not only. Worthfully lost. But he's hopelessly lost. And he's helplessly lost. And it's only the Holy Spirit. Who can recover him.

And rescue him. From his lostness. And so the second parable. Is speaking to us. About the work of the Holy Spirit. In recovering. Lost men and women.

And the third parable. Is speaking to us. About the father. Because you see. It's not only a sheep. That is lost. It is not only a coin.

[ 19 : 40 ] That is lost. But it's a rational. Intelligent creature. That is lost. A creature. Who has brought misery. Upon himself. And is in a hopeless condition.

And in a hopeless position. He has brought misery. On himself. And his hope. Is in returning. To a loving father.

Who was waiting for him. And so we have here. Therefore. This. Complementary nature. Of these parables. One speaks to us.

Of the work of Christ. The other speaks to us. Of the work of the Holy Spirit. And the third speaks to us. Of the work of the Father. So if you look at the parable.

Of the prodigal son. On its own. It's speaking to you. Of the work of the Father. But you see. It's already assumed. That the son. Does a great work. And the spirit.

[ 20 : 33 ] Does a great work. And when you come to the third parable. It is speaking to you. About the love. Of the Father. And the joy. That the Father experiences. In receiving.

Back his own. And then the third and final thing. In this general loop. Is that the three parables. Form a sequence. Now we couldn't.

Shouldn't lay too much stress on this. That there is an order. In these things. And there is an order. In salvation. And we could say.

That it is by the work of the Son. Applied to us. By the Holy Spirit. That we come back. To the Father. It is. By the work of the Son.

Applied to us. By the Holy Spirit. That we return. To the Father's house. And so there is that order. In these parables. And we know also of course.

[ 21 : 29 ] That in the Trinity. Although the three persons. In the Godhead are equal. There is a subordination. In their relationship.

Not in their nature. They are equal in their nature. But in their relationship. There is a subordination. There is the Father. And there is the eternally begotten Son.

And there is the Holy Spirit. Who is proceeding. From the Father. And the Son. And therefore. There is an order. As you might say. In that respect.

And in this parable. In these parables. We find that same order. There is much more attention. Given. To the work of the Father. Than there is given.

To the work of the Son. And to the work of the Holy Spirit. By far the greatest part. Of the chapter. Is given to the work of the Father. The parable.

[ 22 : 25 ] Of the lost son. The prodigal son. That takes up. The greater proportion. Of the chapter. And we believe. There is some meaning. Behind that.

And you see also. How the value. Of the lost item. Steadily increases. In the first. Parable. The proportion. Is one in a hundred.

One sheep in a hundred. One hundred. One percent. In the second parable. The value is one in ten. Ten percent.

One coin in ten. But when you come to the parable. Of the lost son. It's one in two. Fifty percent. And the joy.

Increases proportionately. It's not. Perhaps a terrible. Great loss. For a shepherd. To lose one sheep. In a hundred. He could get over that.

[ 23 : 23 ] And then. For a woman. To lose. One coin. In ten. A tenth. Of what her savings were. Well. That's quite a lot. For her. The value increases. But then.

To lose one son. In two. That's much more. Important. That's much more. Valuable. To lose. One son.

In two. And therefore. You can see. That the joy. Increases. To recover one sheep. Well. That's something. To be thankful for. To recover.

One coin. In ten. And that is something. To be thankful for. But to recover. One son. Out of two. Well. That's something. To be really joyful. And to be really glad.

About. And you see. The proportion. Increases. The value. Of the lost item. Increases. As the parables. Go on. And therefore.

[ 24 : 19 ] We believe. There's a sequence. In these parables. And the very sequence. Is teaching us. Something. And this morning. To conclude.

With a word of application. As these three parables. Are all speaking to us. About the lostness of man. Do you recognize. Today.

Your lostness. That you are helplessly lost. That you are willfully lost. And that you are hopelessly lost. Because that's what the parables. Are teaching us.

That man by nature. Is lost in all these respects. He's helplessly lost. He's willfully lost. And he's hopelessly lost.

That's our condition. By nature. We are lost sinners. But who is concerned with our salvation. None other than the triune God.

[ 25 : 17 ] And that's the wonderful news. That Jesus is imparting. To these people. That the triune God. Is concerned with our salvation.

They are longing. To have us restored. God is rejoicing. When we are found. God is joyful.

There is joy. Amongst the angels of heaven. When one sinner. Repents. It's God's joy. And delight. To save sinners. And that's the wonderful news.

You see. That's where the Pharisees. Went so far wrong. They looked down their noses. At the sinners. The tax collectors. The wicked people.

They would have nothing to do with them. How unlike God they are. How unlike God. Were these religious people. Who are supposed to be so good.

[ 26 : 14 ] They were totally unlike God. Because God is the person. Who does not look down his nose. At sinners. But God is the person. Who is involved.

In caring for sinners. And is concerned for sinners. And is longing for sinners. To return. He's delighting to save.

God has no pleasure. In the death of the wicked. That's the God. You've got to think about. Not the God. That the scribes. And Pharisees. Would have you believe in. But the God.

Who delights in mercy. And the God. Who delights to save. And the God. Who is waiting. For the sinner to return. And the God. Who rejoices. With exceeding joy.

When the sinner returns. That's the kind of God. That Jesus. Is speaking about. And that's the kind of person. Jesus was. So unlike the religious people.

[ 27 : 11 ] Of his day. He's got this warmth. And he's got this interest. And he's got this concern. With men in our need. With the publicans. And the sinners. And today my friend.

If you're. Indeed acknowledging your lostness. That's one of the greatest blessings. That can ever come to you. Why should I say that?

Well because it puts you in the category. Of those. That God is seeking. And that Jesus came to save. As long as you're in the category.

Of the scribes and Pharisees. There's no hope. But if you recognize today. Your lostness. Then you're putting yourself. In the category. Of those.

That Jesus came to save. And that God is looking for. And searching for. And yearning over. And that's a wonderful news. Even if you're only at that stage.

[ 28 : 07 ] That's a wonderful thing. That you're in a category. Of those. Who Jesus came to save. If you were.

And I think I used this illustration before. If you were held hostage. In a building in London. If you were belonging to another country.

And you were held hostage. In a building in London. And you heard that some people. From your own country. Had come to rescue you. Well even though you were.

In that building at that time. You would know that. These. You were one of these very people. That they had come to save. Because.

You have that identification. With that group. And you see that is what. It is with us. As sinners. We can rejoice in this. That we are in a category.

[ 29 : 04 ] Of those. That Jesus came to save. He came not to call the righteous. But sinners to repentance. And that's the greatest. Glory of the opposition.

If you could say that. That we are in a category. That the father is yearning over. That the son is seeking. That the holy spirit. Is working in.

We are in that category. We are lost. But that is precisely the people. That God is looking for. That God is seeking. That the son is mingling with.

He came not to call the righteous. But sinners. To repentance. So this man. This man. Is welcoming sinners.

And he is eating with them. That is the good news today. He is not calling the righteous. The self righteous. He is calling those. Who know their lostness.

[ 30 : 03 ] And who feel their lostness. And who can do nothing. To save themselves. He is welcoming them. He is welcoming you. He will receive you.

He will not cast you out. If you come to him. May he bless your meditation. Let us conclude. He will receive him. He does not like out. But we are going to have to make his children.

He will love you. Good love you. Good love you. Goodwill. Good one. Good love you. Good love you. Good good three. Good love you. Good love you. Good love you. Good love you. Good love you. Good love you. Good love you.

You 599-6 wenigay. You 599-6 Bachelor. Good Midway. Good ■ iurOOOO. Very good luck guy. Good for you.