

CAPITOL STUDIES

FEBRUARY 4, 2026 • WEEK 4



LUKE FOR LEGISLATORS SECOND SESSION

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Theme Verse

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to **seek** and to **save** that which was **lost**.



The Parables of the Lost



MANY YEARS AGO, MY WIFE AND I were shopping in the Norfolk mall. Our two-year-old daughter was with us. We went into JCPenney. At that time, it was about the size the Lincoln Kohl's store is now. I thought she was with her mother. My wife thought she was with me. When we realized that neither of us had her, we began a frantic search. Of course, it is very hard to see a two-year-old when you have racks and racks of clothes hanging to the ground. We were just ready to find a store clerk or manager to ask them to shut down the store when we found her standing on a pedestal with a mannequin. She was talking to the "big doll." What a relief! Having someone or something that we treasure lost to us is the worst feeling imaginable. In this chapter, Jesus shares three parables dealing with something that was "lost."

Arin Hess

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I. THE PEOPLE

Luke 15:1-2

Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. ²Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”¹

Wherever Jesus went, people followed Him—with mixed reactions.

Tax Collectors usually collected tolls, tariffs, etc. for the Roman Empire. Ordinary people considered them dishonest and self-serving. The Pharisees categorized them with robbers, evildoers, and adulterers (see Luke 18:11). **Sinners** were anyone who did not practice religion and the law the way the ruling Jews thought they should. **Religious Jews** knew the Torah (Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible) very well. But they also added their own interpretations and new laws. **Grumblers** were vocally upset if anyone dared to go against their standards.

The Pharisees and scribes referred to Jesus as “Him” and “This man,” never by name. Chuck Swindoll says, “For months, Jesus had been building a track record of approachability. Without compromising morality or obedience to the law, Jesus systematically challenged the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, socialized with irreligious Jews, accepted them as they were, ministered to their needs, and even stood with them against hypocritical condemnation. His consistency paid off. They ‘were coming to listen to Him.’”²

II. THE PEOPLE’S REACTIONS

Needy people exhibit attraction to One who shows love and compassion toward them and all mankind. Their ears are attentive to His words.

Religious people show animosity toward the One who “receives and eats with sinners!” This word “receives” means to welcome favorably, to look forward, to wait for. “Jesus longed for the company of sinners, waited for them to overcome their suspicions, and then embraced them eagerly. He even socialized with them.”³ The pharisaical hypocrites are constantly offended by Jesus’ association with those they considered sinners.

Christ is fulfilling the theme verse of Luke: “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He calls all to repentance—a change of heart, mind, and direction. He calls them to a new life. Both of these groups are lost. Both of them need Jesus. One group recognizes their need. The other does not think they have a need. They are self-righteous. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

The following two parables picture God’s unrelenting desire to save lost sinners.



III. THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

Luke 15:3-7

So He told them this parable, saying, ⁴“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ ⁷I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

A. The Sheep

Despite his wealth and the pleasures and comfort it brought, Zaccheus was apparently empty and lonely within his heart. This can be imagined because tax collectors were bitterly hated by the people. Zaccheus was also small of stature, which means that he was probably self-conscious, felt inferior, and had a low self-image. Being so little in stature, it was dangerous for him to be out in the midst of a crowd that despised him

Character of the Sheep: They are weak, clueless, helpless, hopeless, and vulnerable. **Condition of the Sheep:** They are *lost*—wandering, blindly following others, and going astray. “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isaiah 53:6).

Did any of the grumbling Pharisees identify with Isaiah’s indictment? “If they had, Jesus’ parable was more than they bargained for. The leaders of Israel were considered undershepherds of their Shepherd God.... The shepherds of Israel were exposed by the Prophet (Ezekiel 34) for not caring for the flock: “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I shall demand my sheep from them.... Behold, I Myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them’” (Ezekiel 34:10-12a).⁴

Pastor Steven Cole says, “Lost—It’s an empty, hopeless word when used in reference to things or to animals, but it’s an especially bleak word when it is used in reference to people.”⁵ “Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

B. The Shepherd’s Search

Dangerous Pasture: Death awaits both the sheep and the Shepherd in the peril of the wilderness. “I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

Dismal Plight: Without the Shepherd’s help, the lost sheep will not find its way back. “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). “For God did not send the Son into





the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17).

Determined Pursuit: The Shepherd will not give up until the sheep is found. “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14).

Desired Prize: The Shepherd carries the hurt, scared, exhausted sheep on His shoulders. He keeps the sheep safe so that it cannot get lost again. “The glad fact is you are not secure in your salvation because of your grip on the Good Shepherd, but rather because of His grip on you.”⁶ “And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28). “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

C. The Shepherd’s Song

The Human Song: The Shepherd rejoices and calls His friends to rejoice that the lost (the needy sinner) has been found. “For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).

The Heavenly Song: Heaven rejoices more over one needy sinner who repents than over many righteous who have no need to repent. The ninety-nine might refer to those who have already repented, but it more likely refers to those who think they need no repentance. The shepherd does not compliment the ninety-nine for not wandering off! It is not that they did not need repentance; it is that they, like the Pharisees, thought they needed no repentance. “You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Psalm 16:11).

“Repentance means turning to God from our sins. Such repentance is God’s gift, not a work of man (Acts 11:18), and is inextricably bound up with saving faith. You cannot have one without the other. When a person savingly believes in Christ, he turns from his sins and trusts in God’s mercy. A person who says, ‘I believe in Jesus,’ but who does not repent of his sins, has not truly believed in Jesus unto salvation.”⁷

IV. THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

Luke 15:8-10

Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!”

¹⁰In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

The Woman’s Distress: She loses her silver coin. This coin may have formed part of the woman’s headdress, which, being part of her dowry, she constantly wore. In that day it would likely have been a tenth of her



savings or means—the price of a sheep, one-fifth the price of an ox, or the day’s wage for an average worker.

The Woman’s Diligence: She carefully searches. She shines light so she can see clearly. She sweeps with certainty that “it must be here somewhere.” “With my mouth I will give thanks abundantly to the Lord; And in the midst of many I will praise Him. For He stands at the right hand of the needy, To save him from those who judge his soul” (Psalm 109:30-31).

The Woman’s Delight: She finds the silver coin and rejoices. She asks her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her. Like in the case of the lost sheep, joy sounds in the presence of God when one lost sinner repents. “...rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven” (Luke 10:20b). “But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation” (Psalm 13:5). “Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, ‘Let God be magnified’” (Psalm 70:4).

CONCLUSION

“It is easy for us today to read these two parables and take their message for granted, but the people who first heard them must have been shocked. Jesus was saying that God actually searches for lost sinners! No wonder the scribes and Pharisees are offended, for there is no place in their legalistic theology for a God like that. They forget that God sought out Adam and Eve when they sinned and hid from God (Gen. 3:8–9). In spite of their supposed knowledge of Scripture, the scribes and Pharisees are forgetting that God is like a father who pities his wayward children (Ps. 103:8–14). They believe their many ‘good’ works will get them to heaven. There are few joys that match the joy of finding the lost and bringing them to the Savior. ‘The church has nothing to do but to save souls,’ said John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. ‘Therefore, spend and be spent in this work.’”⁸

Chaplain Arin Hess

FOOTNOTES

1. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
- 2, 3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke*, Zondervan, 2012, pg. 378-379.
4. Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Autobiography of God: God Revealed in the Parables of Jesus*, Regal Books, 1979, pg. 31.
- 5, 6, 7. Steven J. Cole, “Lesson 71: God’s Lost and Found (Luke 15:1-10),” *Bible.org*, <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-71-god’s-lost-and-found-luke-151-10>.
8. Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Volume 1, Victor Books, 1996, pg. 234.



AMAZING GRACE

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound!
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!
3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.
4. The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be
As long as life endures.
5. Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.
6. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.
7. When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

John Newton, 1772, Verses 1-6; Elhanan Winchester, 1784, Verse 7



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Meeting during the
109th Legislature's
Second Session

SENATORS

6:45 – 7:45 A.M.
Wednesdays

Capitol Office #1004

STAFF

12:00 – 1:00 P.M.
Wednesdays

NE State Office Building
Morrill Room