

Commentary on Luke chapter 15, by Chuck Smith 9.11.22

Reminder next Sunday we leave at 9:30 to go to Little House of Hope
& Prayer in Waterboro, ME a 1 hour trip

Pastor John Donovan, cell phone 508-380-0471

Pastor Terry Gerlarneau, cell phone 603-455-4399

Web site todbc.org email us at opendoorbiblechurch@todbc.org

September memory verse: Romans 6:14-18 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?

¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

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Then drew near to him all the publicans and sinners to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners, and eats with them ([Luk 15:1-2](#)).

Notice the four groups that had gathered divided into two categories. First of all, the publicans and sinners. Publicans were tax collectors, the outcast of that society, one of the most hated persons in the community. They were considered by the Jews to be traders. And they were always classified with sinners.

So the publicans and the sinners had gathered to hear Jesus. It is amazing that many of the publicans were attracted to Jesus. Matthew was a publican called to be a disciple. He left his receipt of customs and followed Jesus. Zacchaeus was a publican. And after his encounter with Jesus, he said, "Behold, I will take half of my goods (they were always wealthy people) and give it to the poor. And if I have taken fragrantly from any man, I will restore to him twofold." Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house." The publicans were attracted to Jesus as were the sinners, because He had a message of hope for them. They gathered to hear. But the others, the Pharisees and the scribes, they gathered to find fault. They were looking for things by which they might accuse Jesus. They were waiting for a slipup. They were waiting for some mistake so that they could pounce upon it and accuse Him. So they began to say, murmuring,

He receives sinners, and eats with them ([Luk 15:2](#)).

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They thought they were saying something horrible in condemning Him, but in reality, they were proclaiming a glorious gospel. Jesus receives sinners and you can become one with Him.

John wrote, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you might have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ." He receives sinners and He eats with them. He becomes one with them. He dips in the same sop with them. He eats the same bread with them. He is identifying with them. Yes, He does. Thank God He does, and because He does there is hope for every one of us.

So, there were those that were hearing Him, desiring to hear Him. And there were those who were seeking to find fault with Him, looking for something to condemn.

Now, what should have been if they were truly righteous men, the Pharisees and the scribes? What should be their attitudes when sinners were responding to the gospel? What should be the reaction if we see sinners saved? I oftentimes hear people criticize Billy Graham and his campaigns. You see hundreds of people flowing forward to accept Jesus Christ, and they say, "Yes, but a lot of them don't stick." They are sour apples, rather than saying, "Bless God! Look at that. Praise the Lord," and rejoicing that all of these people are accepting the Lord. Instead, they are looking for something to find fault in. They say, "He preaches a cheap gospel."

When the hippies were coming to Jesus by the hundreds, as I was going across the country, I would have pastors come up to me and say, "I saw pictures of your baptisms at Corona Del Mar, but when are they going to cut their hair?" Rather than saying, "I saw the pictures, and my, a thousand young people being baptized, how glorious. Bless God; that is glorious. That's thrilling!" They have to pick on something and they can't really rejoice that the Lord receives sinners. But instead, they are sour apples over it. Jealous or whatever.

And so Jesus spoke this parable unto them ([Luk 15:3](#)),

Unto who? Unto the Pharisees and scribes, because of their sour apple remark.

He said,

What man of you, you have a hundred sheep, and you lose one of them, will you not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until you find it? And when you have found it, laid it upon your shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, and he says unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep that was lost ([Luk 15:4-6](#)).

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So when you find the lost sheep there is the rejoicing. There is the rejoicing in the neighborhood. "Rejoice, I have found the lost sheep."

And then Jesus said unto you,

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than ninety-nine just persons, who don't need to repent ([Luk 15:7](#)).

So while the guys down here are saying, "When are they going to cut their hair?" The angels are up having a whoopee time rejoicing that the lost has been found. Joy in heaven.

Either what woman has ten pieces of silver, and she lose one piece, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she had found it, she called her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which was lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents ([Luk 15:8-10](#)).

Again, the natural response to finding that which is lost is rejoicing. The Lord said that there is joy in heaven over just one sinner who repents.

And 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 falleth to me. And so he divided unto them his living ([Luk 15:11-12](#)).

Now, under the law when there were two sons, the older son received two thirds of the inheritance and the younger son received one third of the inheritance. That was just the law. And many times if a father wanted to retire, he would divide the inheritance to the sons before his death. It would automatically belong to the son after the death of the father. But this boy had the audacity to come his dad and say, "Dad, I would like my inheritance now." So the father divided the inheritance.

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent everything, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine ([Luk 15:13-15](#)).

This was a job forbidden to the Jew. "Cursed is the man that feeds the swine."

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man would give to him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of

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my father's have enough bread that they could spare, and yet I'm dying of hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called your son: but make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and he came to his father. But when he was yet 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 unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on him [the family signet ring], and put shoes on his feet ([Luk 15:16-22](#)):

Shoes on the feet were significant, because the slaves were never given shoes, only the family members, the son. Slaves were never given shoes by their masters.

So the son said, "Hey, I am not worthy to be called your son, just a servant." The dad didn't even let him finish the speech. He said, "Put the shoes on him."

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and let's 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 elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard the music and saw the dancing. And he called one of the servants, and said what's going on. And he said unto him, your brother has come home; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore his father came out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years I have served thee, and I didn't transgress at any time your commandment; and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might have a party with my friends: But as soon as this your son was come, which has devoured your living with prostitutes, you have killed for him the fatted calf ([Luk 15:23-30](#)).

Now, here is the, really, the real point of the parable. Though it may teach many things, the parable was intended against the Pharisees. All three actually did, but He is building up. In each of the parables, there is something lost that is found and the result of finding that which was lost was rejoicing, happiness. Jesus receives sinners. That shouldn't be said in a derogatory sense. That should be said in a rejoicing sense. Jesus receives sinners! There is hope, friend. Rejoice! Jesus receives sinners. And yet, they were not saying it with that inflection, but they were saying it in a derogatory sense. "He receives sinners and eats with them." So as the natural reaction to finding something that is lost should be rejoicing, the Pharisees are angry. They are condemning. They are sitting back and judging. So the story was given.

In the third story, Jesus adds the older brother and his attitude towards the rejoicing, because the father receives sinners. And here he is out there sulking, angry and upset.

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He is not going to join in. "You have never done anything like this for me." And his sulking attitude, because the father received the sinner. "He went out and spent everything he had on prostitutes. He is a sinner. Yet, you have a big party because he comes home." This was the same attitude that the Pharisees were expressing.

To me it is interesting that the father said,

Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours ([Luk 15:31](#)).

You see, the younger son had taken his inheritance, so that everything that was left belonged to the older son. "All that I have is yours."

It was necessary that we should have this party, and be glad: for this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found ([Luk 15:32](#)).

Because the Lord receives sinners and eats with them, the lost is found. Jesus said, "I have come to seek and to save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)).

So we so often hear marvelous sermons preached from the parable of the prodigal son, but rarely do we ever hear a message that really gives the true meaning of the parable, or the real reason for the parable. The reason wasn't just to show the father receiving with joy a son that was lost, but the parable was used to show the Pharisees how wrong was their condemnation of Him when they said, "He receives sinners and eats with them." They should have been rejoicing over it, rather than griping over it.

May God help us that we will not have a pharisaical attitude towards the work of God in receiving sinners, because maybe He is receiving them at some other church in the county rather than here. It doesn't matter where He receives them. Let us rejoice that He is receiving them. Let us pray that God will send a great spiritual awakening throughout the county in every church. Let us not be so shortsighted and narrow-minded that we are only praying for God's blessing upon Calvary Chapel, because God knows we can't house them all. But let us begin to really pray that God will revive His church throughout this entire county and that sinners would be brought to Christ, that the Lord might receive sinners anywhere and everywhere, that there might be revival in the Baptist church and the Methodist church, the Lutheran church and the Presbyterian church. Let us just pray that God might just be able to receive sinners in all of these churches, that there would be a real move of God's Spirit throughout the whole area.

If we hear of revival somewhere, let us not go and try to find the faults that may exist in their doctrines or positions. "Well, Lord, they didn't follow us so we told them not to do it." Jesus said, "You should not have done that. If they are out there doing it in My name, they can't very well be against us. Don't stop them." God deliver us from narrow

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sectarianism, from an attitude of the Pharisee, but to the same heart of Jesus. Let us rejoice that the Lord receives sinners and eats with them.