

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 30: Luke 15:1-32

Charles Spurgeon said, “The truth... is just this: that mercy stretches forth her hand to misery, that grace receives men as sinners, that it deals with demerit, unworthiness and worthlessness; that those who think themselves righteous are not the objects of divine compassion, but the unrighteous, the guilty and the undeserving, are the proper subjects for the infinite mercy of God; in a word, that salvation is not of merit but of grace.”

Salvation gifted to the lost—those who transgressed the law and disobeyed God’s commands—seemed unjust to those who had sought to honor Him with slave-like obedience. Sinners and publicans were given honor and granted all the privileges of God’s house, while the righteous were overlooked and unappreciated. It made their efforts appear inconsequential.

Accolades for the outcasts had caused them to forget their place and their heritage. “*You are always with me, and all that I have is yours*” (Luke 15:31, NKJV). “*Be glad for your [brethren who were] dead and [are] alive again, and [who were] lost and [are] found*” (15:32).

Read Luke 15:1-10.

1. Why were the tax collectors and the sinners drawn to Christ? (Consider the preceding verses.)
2. Why did the scribes and Pharisees complain?
3. How did the sheep and the coin become lost?
4. What type of search was made for them? What does this reveal about Christ’s mission? Record Luke 19:10.

5. Reread verses 7 & 10. What point was Christ trying to make to the religious leaders?

Read Luke 15:11-32.

6. The youngest of two sons sought to be independent of his father and his house. What motivated his actions? Why do you believe the father allowed him to make his choice?
7. Define the term *prodigal*.
8. What became of the young man's inheritance apart from his father's care?
9. To whom did he turn when he began to be in want? (v.14-16) What did they offer him?
10. Ultimately, what did the lack of basic physical needs produce in the young man?
11. In verses 17-19, what do his words reveal about his thoughts of himself, his actions, his father, and his heritage? Does this resemble today's idea of repentance? Why or why not? (Read Psalm 51 and see Appendix A.)

12. How did the father receive his son? How does this speak of his love for him? (vv.20-24)
(See also Colossians 2:13.)

13. How did the older brother react to his brother's penitence?

14. Christ pleaded with the religious leaders like the father pleaded with his eldest son.
Why did the son refuse to enter the house and join the celebration? (vv.29-30)

15. What privileges did the oldest son enjoy? (v.31) Why then, were his feelings unjust?

“The proud and self-righteous always feel that they are not treated as well as they deserve” (Morris).

16. Now compare the two sons; also the sinners and the religious leaders. Why did the “righteous” oppose the father's actions? What is the true reason they were unable to rejoice over the “salvation” of the sinners and tax collectors (the sheep, the coin, the prodigal son)?

17. It is likely that the eldest son observed his father waiting and watching for the return of his lost brother, and yet he failed to understand his father's heartⁱⁱ. Why? Read Luke 5:32 and Romans 5:8.

In closing, read Ephesians 2:1-22.

Appendix A

“There are three Greek words used in the New Testament to denote repentance. (1.) The verb *metamelomai* is used of a change of mind, such as to produce regret or even remorse on account of sin, but not necessarily a change of heart. This word is used with reference to the repentance of Judas (Matt. 27:3).

(2.) *Metanoeo*, meaning to change one’s mind and purpose, as the result of after knowledge. This verb, with (3.) the cognate noun *metanoia*, is used of true repentance, a change of mind and purpose and life, to which remission of sin is promised.

Evangelical repentance consists of (1) a true sense of one’s own guilt and sinfulness; (2) an apprehension of God’s mercy in Christ; (3) an actual hatred of sin (Ps. 119:128; Job 42:5, 6; 2 Cor. 7:10) and turning from it to God; and (4) a persistent endeavour after a holy life in a walking with God in the way of his commandments.

The true penitent is conscious of guilt (Ps. 51:4, 9), of pollution (51:5, 7, 10), and of helplessness (51:11; 109:21, 22). Thus he apprehends himself to be just what God has always seen him to be and declares him to be. But repentance comprehends not only such a sense of sin, but also an apprehension of mercy, without which there can be no true repentance (Ps. 51:1; 130:4).”
(Easton’s Bible Dictionary)

ⁱ In verse 29, the phrase “*I have been serving (douleuo) you; I have never transgressed your commandment at any time*” indicates slave-like obedience to the father’s written and verbal commands.

ⁱⁱ “His story reveals the possibility of living in the father’s house and failing to understand the father’s heart” (Morgan).