

[Over One Sinner] / Gospel of Luke 15:3 – 32

~ Our Spiritual Safari leaves Luke's lecture hall and the Pharisee's dining room as we travel to the art school of God's divinity. In this report, we will break out our Holy Spirit oil paint to create a triptych picture of our current life on three empty canvasses. We are going to paint a lost coin, a lost sheep and a lost son – all in one fitting framework! If you don't care for spiritually artistic reading: this picture will not suit you. The picture I am going to attempt to paint from the Word of God will portray our lost condition so clearly that I would hope even a child would be able to understand these truths.

Our last leg on safari ended with the multitudes pressing in on the apostles from every side to hear the Lord Jesus preach. The Pharisees and scribes were accusing Him, correctly, of eating with and associating with publicans and sinners. So long ago, a young woman slipped into a church when she overheard that Jesus received sinners. She wrote the pastor and said she didn't know she was in the Bible! That woman could have been your mother! See, we can argue about that truth all day long or we can agree that Jesus was receiving sinners....

3 And he spake unto them this parable, saying,

4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, [more] than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

~ We apply our initial background texture by painting the lost sheep and the shepherd who went out and found it. Jesus had one hundred sheep and one got lost. Any sheep farmer will tell you that a loss of up to ten percent in any drive is a fantastic outcome. One percent would not be noticeable. This Shepherd went out and put that one little sheep on His shoulders and carried him back to the flock. Most people don't think I'll make it to Heaven – but here – it says I will! I am going to make it because this Shepherd is able to save every last one of us, friends. Remember, Aaron, the high priest, wore on his shoulders the names of the children of Israel engraved on stones; six on each shoulder. That's how the high priest carried Israel. God isn't going to lose track of you you, friends. God began with one hundred sheep and He says He is coming through the gate with one hundred sheep – do you believe him? He won't show up with ninety-nine sheep and one goat, either – they're all sheep! This is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ going out and looking for those who are His own. This could define predestination in terms; unfortunately, man has been totally unwilling to come to terms with this solution for two thousand years plus now....

8 Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it?

~ This picture exposes a woman who has lost one piece of the set of her wedding ring set, as was customary. Lighting the lamp speaks of the Holy Spirit moving in her life. Every one of His children are valuable to Him is what we can see with the lamp lighting our canvas brightly. Over one sinner, rejoicing; what a simply merciful picture we begin to see....

9 And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

~ Now, the third picture is the centerpiece and, in this one, we see God the Father - the "certain Man." I understand the generally accepted interpretation of the prodigal son account, but we're going extreme center in this picturesque report - and laying down a contrast picture in the Word of God. Two sons come before us now - and one extremely loving and forgiving father. We can easily make the reasonable conclusion that BOTH of these sons were prodigal's, by the way. The father is overly indulgent with the younger boy; and nothing is forced on him. There are no conditions set on the younger son. You can walk right away from God if you want to - that's your own business. The rich young ruler walked away from Jesus, and the account says the Lord still loved him. At the same time, the Lord Jesus didn't sing a hymn to see if the rich young ruler would come forward, either. The Lord Jesus turned - and moved on. Friends, we just have to get this thing called the Bible real in our lives and thinking - or the rest of it will be useless to us; actually, it will be a curse to us from here in that condition....

12 and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of [thy] substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 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.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

~ Most children want to leave home at some point. Dr. Streeter coined the phrase the Sin of Propinquity. The overall definition is that things near at hand are wrong and things far away and out of reach are the good things. The problem I have with that is that far away lands are so attractive, but my

hometown has lost all of its color. The chief allurements of any sin is its mystery. Some people say the grass is always greener on the other side. I find that just a little too simple. Well, the younger boy packed up and bought a one-way ticket to the far country, either way! That's also where the trouble always comes to any prodigal son.

When Jesus says that this boy got down with the swine, the crowd shuddered and winced - hard - because they knew what Jesus was talking about. For us, the parable means the bottom of life has been located very definitely. Remember, the prodigal son in the pigpen is not a pig – he is still a son! Many people believe it is not possible to preach a Gospel sermon on the prodigal son. Frankly, friends – I just did! We are NOT talking about how a sinner comes to Christ to become saved, though. This is a son that always was a son and if he had died in the pig pen, he would still have been a son! We find nothing here about the need for repentance or even believing in Christ. If you get in the pig-pen – you will live like an animal – but you will still be a child of God. Do you want to live like that? You cannot question our reasonable conclusion that the younger brother was, and always will be, the son of the man in the subject of this parable.

We always get in trouble in the far country, friends. Readers Digest had an article several decades ago entitled 'I Like Pigs!' Lately, pigs have become the pets of people who insist they really aren't dirty animals. Pig owners invariably try to tell others the pig is a clean animal. It's asinine. I am no authority on pigs, but if you put a pig in the pig pen it is right at home. It loves it in that filthy mess! If you are a son of God, you aren't going to like it very much down in the pigpen, my friends; and if you fall in it, you're going to want to get out as fast as you can. If you don't want to get out, then you are just a pig – it's really that simple....

17 But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger!

~ This man came to the best place one can come to: the senses of himself. Next to coming to Christ, we have a whole lot of people who need to come to their senses. This boy is living in the pig pen and he is thinking of his

father now back home. They have bread back there. Friends, no pig ever arose and went to their father! ~

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father; I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight:

19 I am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 and bring the fatted calf, [and] kill it, and let us eat, and make merry:

24 for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

~ If you are walking in the direct will of God, you will have the best of everything. By contrast, you will never find any good in the far country. Tears of trouble are turned to tears of sheer delight in the Father's house. This is where forced fasting turns into feasting. The beggar goes to a banquet today. Fragments are forgotten as the fatted calf is brought forth. Draw near to God and God will draw near to you, my beloved safari travelers. This parable of the prodigal son is a rare jewel the Lord has given us to hold and keep. This man got very far away from God; but he came back to God on God's terms. He came back by confession and by confession only. Actually, the father didn't even let him complete his confession – he just brought him right back in the family with no additional questions asked. This is the path by which the child of God who sins gets back home, friends – there is no other way....

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things might be.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 But he was angry, and would not go in: and his father came out, and entreated him.

~ The other son is a prodigal son, too – as we said – he just stayed around the house. He may have worked hard, but let's be clear – he's angry and resentful at his brother's repentance - and the acceptance of it by their father! Today, there are men who say they want to live for God - and many of them are NOT out in the far country - but spiritually, they are as poor as Job's turkey, because they are angry at the spiritual blessing's others have received. God tells us that everything is ours - and that's where we are going to stop this report and meditate. Our Father is rich in all spiritual and substance and all possessions. You may want to write that down....

29 But he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine; and [yet] thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 but when this thy son came, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine.

32 But it was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive [again]; and [was] lost, and is found.

~ We aren't told if this elder son ever got back in fellowship with the father and his brother or not. That is a deeply troubling and disturbing way to leave this story hanging. What about it, friends? How is your fellowship with the Father? The second son certainly could have come back into fellowship, but the tone is that he went away angry. That smells suspiciously a lot like Christian Tragedy.

Dr. Chadwick, decades ago, gave a third son in the parable of the prodigal son. Who could it possibly be? The third son is the son giving the narrative of the parable. That is God's IDEAL and PERFECT Son – the Holy Spirit. This Man went to the far country but did the will of the Father! This third Son didn't live riotously; He died sacrificially. This was no prodigal – this will be the Prince of Peace because He shed His blood for the sins of the world. To as many as received Him gave He them the right to be called sons of God; even unto them who do no more nor less than simply believe in His Name ~

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