

NT LESSON #18

# “HE WAS LOST AND IS FOUND”

Luke 15,17

by Ted L. Gibbons

**INTRODUCTION:** Have you ever lost something important? How did you feel when it was found? Have you ever lost a small child, or been lost yourself? What feelings did you have as you searched for a missing infant, or when a missing toddler was found?

Part of the power of the teachings of the Savior was found in his ability to draw spiritual lessons from the common experiences of the people. Try to identify with these parables of the Savior that relate to the emotions of finding something valuable that you have lost?

## **I. THE SAVIOR TEACHES THE WORTH OF SOULS--Luke 15:1-10.**

Read the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin (Luke 15:4-10) As you read, look for words or phrases to underline in each verse to highlight the most important ideas. What idea is repeated in verses 4 and 8? (searching for that which is lost) What idea is repeated in verses 5,6,7,9,& 10? (joy and rejoicing)

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose 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 neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

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

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

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

Identify the groups who were listening to these parables (Luke 15:1,2) ("publicans and sinners;" "Pharisees and scribes.") Note that explanations of the characteristics of publicans, Pharisees, and scribes can be found in the Bible Dictionary or the Guide to the Scriptures. What do you think the Savior would want each of these groups to learn from these parables? What does he want you to learn?

## **II. JESUS TEACHES THAT HEAVENLY FATHER REJOICES IN FORGIVING THE REPENTANT--Luke 15:25-32**

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

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods 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 wasted his substance with riotous

living.

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

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen 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.

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

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

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

20 And he arose, and 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.

21 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.

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

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

And they began to be merry .

As you read Luke 15:11-24, you may wish to ponder the following points:

1. The younger son traveled to a "far country". What do these "far countries" represent in our world? (15:13)
2. What happens to the son in the "far country" (15:13)? What happens to us when we leave the Father's influence and journey to a "far country"?
3. How much is required of those who journey there? (15:14--"he spent all.")
4. When the prodigal had spent all and was in want, who in this far country, which is often typified as Babylon, cared about him? (15:15,16) How does this apply to us? (See Alma 30:60)
5. As a result of these conditions, what does the son decide to do? (Luke 15:17- 19,21) How is the son's attitude an example of true repentance?

Do not overlook the fact that it is in part the recollection of a great father that encourages this boy to return home. Then think about the response of the father to the repentance and return of his son. How is his response like the response of our Father in Heaven when we repent? What does the father do when he sees his son? (15:20) How close is the son when the father runs to him? (15:20) Does the father treat the returning prodigal like a servant or a son? One commentary on this parable pointed out that slaves did not wear shoes. They were reserved for family members. The ring was a symbol of power. And then there is the robe. What sort of robe does the father give to this returning prodigal? Why the *best robe*? What does the response of the father have in common with the first two parables in this chapter? (15:21-24).

Remember the groups who are listening to these parables (Luke 15: 1,2) What would the Savior want each of these groups to learn from this the parable of the prodigal son?

Many years ago a young lady shared this experience with me. She is a remarkable disciple, and her life has come to typify the highest levels of Christian conduct and goodness, but for a time in Junior High and High School, she strayed from the straight and narrow path and became lost, like the coin, the lamb, and the prodigal son.

Following her high school experiences, she traveled to Wyoming to work for a summer on a "Dude Ranch" near Jackson Hole. Her parents were not pleased to have her so far away, but both recognized that their major function at that time was to extend love and support. Even though she had been continually willing to talk to them, to admit her transgressions and weaknesses, she had ceased being willing to listen to their counsel. And so she went.

She did not go un-loved, nor un-tutored. A marvelous bishop had worked with her for years, and the teachings of her parents had found a responsive, although often subdued, chord in her life. Thus, even when she did things that were wrong, she knew that they were wrong, and struggled with the differences between her beliefs and her actions.

One evening she left the girls' dorm at the ranch. She was on the way to the Wranglers' Dorm—the dormitory where the young men employed by the ranch made their summer homes. She knew as she walked along that what she intended to do she should not do, and a part of her did not want to go on. But another, and usually stronger part, did. She told me that as she walked, she began to pray: "Heavenly Father, why don't you stop me."

And she got an answer. A message came clearly to her heart, a message something like this: "Daughter, I can't stop you. But if you will stop yourself, and turn around, I will help you."

She was so surprised by this unexpected response that she stopped walking. (She described this to me in great detail) She said, "I stopped, and then slowly turned around until I was facing back the way I had come. And for the first time in months, perhaps years, I felt the Spirit in my heart. It was as though the Father was by my

side. I began to walk to back to my own room, and I was not alone." It was at that moment that her life began to change. As soon as she turned around and started home, "[her] Father saw [her], and had compassion, and ran, and fell on [her] neck, and kissed [her]." (Luke 15:20) He then made the journey home by her side.

The boy in the parable wanted only to be a servant in his father's house, but his father, seeing him afar off, ran to meet him and kissed him, put a robe on his back, a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and had a feast prepared for him.

So it will be with you. If you will take the first timid step to return, you will find open arms to greet you and warm friends to make you welcome (Gordon B. Hinckley, "Everything to Gain—Nothing to Lose," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 95).

This young woman later married to wonderful young man, a returned missionary in the Salt Lake Temple. She must have felt the power of the Spirit and the overflowing love—the rejoicing—of the Father and his angels as she knelt there in that holy place, clean and worthy and beautiful beyond words. The Father had brought forth the robe and the ring and the shoes, and killed the fatted calf to welcome her home.

There is of course another son in the parable. He is the faithful, diligent, steady son, home with the livestock and the problems of the farm while his younger brother "wasted his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:13) and "devoured [his father's] living with harlots . . ." (Luke 15:30). A trace of bitterness in him is not a great surprise. We are all like him to some degree. Jeffrey R. Holland spoke of this regrettable tendency.

As others seem to grow larger in our sight, we think we must therefore be smaller. So, unfortunately, we occasionally act that way.

How does this happen, especially when we wish so much that it would not? I think one of the reasons is that every day we see allurements of

one kind or another that tell us what we have is not enough. Someone or something is forever telling us we need to be more handsome or more wealthy, more applauded or more admired than we see ourselves as being. We are told we haven't collected enough possessions or gone to enough fun places. We are bombarded with the message that on the *world's* scale of things we have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Some days it is as if we have been locked in a cubicle of a great and spacious building where the only thing on the TV is a never-ending soap opera entitled *Vain Imaginations* ("The Other Prodigal," *Ensign*, May 2002, 62 ff).

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

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

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 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

29 And he answering said to [his] father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

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

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Ponder attitude of the older son. Why does he feel the way he does? What does the

father say to alleviate the son's concerns? What does the father say to the older son? (Luke 15:31) Should the younger son be given the opportunity to regain his wasted inheritance? Have you ever encountered an attitude in the church today that would be similar to the attitude of the older son. What is the older son afraid of if the younger son is allowed to return to the family?

Reflect on the great leaders in the Book of Mormon who rebelled and then later returned, much as the prodigal son. (Alma the Younger, 4 sons of Mosiah, etc ). What hope does this parable, and the testimony of these men, offer to the "prodigal sons" of today? In what way are we all prodigal sons?

Why is it that we sometimes want our mortal experiences to be evaluated like sums in a math class: "You were bad a total of 72 times and good only 64. Therefore, you are more bad than good and you can go to Hell!" This is not the manner in which the Father and the Son calculate our preparation for salvation. Their only concern is, "What are you?" Not, "what were you." Read Isaiah 1:18; Ezekiel 18:21,22; Isaiah 43:25; Mosiah 26:30. What do these verses tell you about the importance the Lord places on past mistakes when we repent? What must we be willing to do when those apparently less worthy than ourselves return to be with us and among us? Why is this sometimes so hard to do.

Who is it that whispers so subtly in our ear that a gift given to another somehow diminishes the blessings we have received? Who makes us feel that if God is smiling on another, then He surely must somehow be frowning on us? You and I both know who does this—it is the father of all lies. <sup>3</sup> It is Lucifer, our common enemy, whose cry down through the corridors of time is always and to everyone, "Give me thine honor" ("The Other Prodigal," *Ensign*, May 2002, 62 ff; read the whole talk).

What does Luke 17:3,4 suggest as a proper attitude for all who are privileged to welcome back a returning prodigal? How often is the Lord willing to forgive the



repentant? How often does he instruct us to forgive? (Mosiah 26:30; Moroni 6:8; D&C 64:9-11; Matt. 18:21,22, etc.)

Since the Father is so willing to forgive us, there are certain things the scriptures say we should do. One of those things is illustrated by the story of the 10 men with leprosy.

#### **IV. A MAN WHOM JESUS HAS HEALED OF LEPROSY RETURNS TO THANK HIM.**

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the

nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Read in Luke 17: 11-19 the story of these ten lepers. There is much about these ten that can teach us. Note that they meet the Savior as he enters into the village. Their disease prevents them from the normal associations that almost all men long for. And they must lift up their voices to speak to him. They must be pleading with great earnestness, but they are also keeping their distance. They are considered contagious. How often do the sins of unhappy people keep them far away from the very experiences that might bring them peace?

What does this story suggest we should do when we need to be healed. What should we do when the Savior heals us physically or spiritually? Why do you think nine of those with leprosy did not return to give thanks? This experience from my mission has helped me understand something about giving thanks.

"Much of my childhood my mother spent on her knees. She was not giving thanks. She was praying for strength. I was trouble with a capital "T ." Dad always said I was the rock-throwingest kid in the history of America, and there were broken windows and cracked windshields enough to prove it. When I discovered Mom liked flowers, I picked three hundred tulips from a neighbor's yard and delivered them to her. I shut down a construction company one weekend when I discovered that the workers left the keys with the equipment and I decided to add to my collection. I wasn't wicked, but I was a ton of trouble.

"Still, I loved the Church and I looked forward to my mission. After several months in the field, I wrote home to tell Mom that I had been

called to a leadership position. I thought she would be proud. When she answered my letter, she began like this: 'When I got your letter, I began a fast. ...'

"A fast? ' Why a fast?' I thought. I wrote home once to tell my mother I was going to have a routine physical examination. She put my name on the prayer roll. Now she had received a letter containing what she should have considered good news, and she fasted! Her letter continued: " ...because I wanted to get as close as I could to my Father in Heaven, so that I could tell him how grateful I am for what he has done for you in your life. She fell on her face at his feet, "giving him thanks." (Luke 17:16) [*Rending the Veil of Heaven*, by Ted L. Gibbons, p. 45]

**CONCLUSION:** Pres. Boyd K. Packer taught

The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fullness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. ..I repeat, save for the exception of the very few who defect to perdition, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. That is the promise of the atonement of Christ. (Conference Report, Oct. 1995, pp. 22,23)

But there is still a price to be paid for time away from the straight and narrow path. We must not find in the kindness—the mercy and grace—of the Savior a license to sin, but rather a longing to stay close to the love of Lord.

But please do not misunderstand the true meaning of the scriptures.

One may not wallow in the mire of filth and sin and conduct his life in a manner unlawful in the sight of God and then suppose that repentance will wipe out the effects of his sin and place him on the level he would have been on had he always lived a righteous and virtuous life. The Lord extends loving mercy and kindness in forgiving you of the sins you commit against Him or His work, but He can never remove the results of the sin you have committed against yourself in thus retarding your own advancement toward your eternal goal (Harold B. Lee, Stand Ye In Holy Places, p.221).

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