

Meditations on the Parables of Mercy – 2



The Lost Coin

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to Jesus, and the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'

So he told them this parable:

'Or again what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep the house and search thoroughly till she found it?

And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," she would say "I have found the drachma I lost."

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.'

Luke 15:1-3, 8-10

Way In... Initial Reflections

(5 minutes)

The Joy of Celebration

The drachmas in this parable were silver and were equivalent to what was paid for a day's work. This amount might well have been the life savings of the woman or her family. Silver drachmas were also given as a dowry to young brides so they had great sentimental value, like a wedding ring. They were sometimes worn as a decoration across the forehead. Whether for financial or sentimental reasons this loss was deeply upsetting for the woman.

Notice that her first reaction, after recognising that the coin is missing, is to shed light on the situation, literally, by lighting a lamp – so that the darkness is dispelled. Then she thoroughly sweeps the house, carefully, and tirelessly searching, without giving up.

Putting the parable in context.

The collection of stories in Chapters 14 & 15 are found only in Luke and reflect the two edged thrust of Jesus' message. The stern warnings in Ch 14 are aimed at the proud who see no need for God whilst the gentler parables in Ch 15 reflect Gods limitless love for us.

Jesus had just been addressing the Pharisees and the scribes who had been complaining that He always associated with sinners. (Luke 15.1-2) They were angry that he did not separate Himself from them. Perhaps because of their own self-righteousness they were blind to who Jesus really was.

The Parable of the Lost Coin makes the same point as the preceding parable which is about men.

Having found her coin, she immediately calls her friends. The Greek translation gives "friends and neighbours" as female a point that would not have been missed by Jesus' listeners. So this small event has turned into a celebration of a small community, and there is no doubt that it is a joyous and inclusive event that would have been noticed and remarked upon by a wider audience.

How can I celebrate the love of God in my small community?

Digging Deeper

(15 min)

Straying and Returning

Like the woman searching for the coin, the first and most important step for us is to be aware of what is it that is missing. It could be ourselves who are lost, hidden in the dark, for whatever reason. The second step is knowing that God is always aware, noticing, seeking, longing to find us. We can be open, and notice where God's 'light' is, sweeping, searching in every dark nook and cranny. And the final step

is being found and celebrating that 'reunion'.

Notice that it is in recognising that something precious is lost that triggers the seeking, culminating in the joyful celebration of the woman and her community when what is lost has been found. We rejoice because we

are found, God rejoices because we are found, the community rejoices because a precious person returns.

In being open to the 'light' of God, we become aware of his love that is drawing us back, turning us again towards God. This 'repentance' or active turning to God again, is a cause of great joy.

Words like 'redemption' and 'mercy' are loaded with meaning, and we hear them differently according to our circumstances. What is absolutely certain is God's limitless love, timeless and without measure. Sometimes we have a hard time opening to this love, putting in its way a lack of self-worth, guilt or pride, or other baggage we carry. The parable tells us God is always seeking, and we too can experience the joy of being found by God and restored to our rightful place in his family, our families, our communities.

Inside-Out

(10 min)

How does this reflect your daily life?

Imagine yourself as someone who has lost something very precious?

What does it feel like to find that thing?

Who would you contact first?

What would you do next?

Who is really important to you and who would rejoice with you? Who would you not bother to tell?

How might this finding change what you do differently in future?

Inside the Text (10 min)

Re-read the first sentence and ponder...

Ask yourself what the word 'rejoice' or joyful means to you.

How do you use the word of others?

How do you use the word of yourself?

How often do you see joy around you?

What gives you joy?

What do you observe constitutes real joy as opposed to 'happiness'?

Ponder the words ...

'there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner'

In what way can we share the joy of Christ in our daily lives with those around us?

Pray a Psalm

(10 min)

Slowly read through Psalm 129 (130) and ponder what the psalm adds to the overall picture. How do we experience God's limitless love for those in real need? He stands ready to forgive all who turn to Him.?

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord, Lord, hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord, who would survive?

But with you is found forgiveness: for this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word.

My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman for daybreak.

(Let the watchman count on daybreak and Israel on the Lord.)

Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption, Israel indeed he will redeem from all its iniquity.



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