

## 50. Jesus Taught About Joy in Heaven

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus told people to count the cost of becoming His disciple. We saw that it is important for people to count the cost because Jesus wants His disciples to be the salt of the earth and He wants each follower to be like good salt. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus gave the first two of three parables about the joy that there is in heaven each time that a sinner repents and places his or her faith in Jesus.

We have seen that large crowds wanted to see Jesus as He traveled toward Jerusalem. These crowds included both those who wanted to hear Jesus and those who rejected Jesus. Luke 15:1-2 says, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’” Many of the scribes and Pharisees thought that all Jews would be in the kingdom of God except the tax collectors and sinners. In contrast, the tax collectors and sinners came to hear Jesus because they felt accepted by Him.

We see that the Pharisees and scribes immediately began complaining. They had two reasons why they complained. First, they complained because Jesus received sinners. The word translated “received” means *to take to one’s self or to accept*. This word is used in Titus 2:13 where we read, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” In this verse, the word is translated “looking for” and speaks of an eager desire for the return of Jesus. Jesus looked for opportunities to spend time with tax collectors and sinners so that He could share with them how to receive forgiveness of sins.

Second, we see that the Pharisees and scribes complained because Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. This is not the first time the Pharisees complained because Jesus sat down with tax collectors. Right after Jesus called Levi (Matthew) to follow Him, we read, in Luke 5:29-30, “Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’” In this case, we see that they complained to the disciples of Jesus. Jesus responded for the disciples by answering, in Luke 5:31-32, “‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” Jesus always had a concern to show love to those that were rejected by the Jewish religious leaders.

Jesus chose to show His love for the tax collectors and sinners by giving three parables. The third parable will also show that Jesus had this same love for the scribes and Pharisees but they were rejecting that love. The first parable is given in Luke 15:3-7 where we read, “So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’” I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who

repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” This first parable speaks about the concern that even a scribe or a Pharisee would have if he lost one of his sheep.

When a person was caring for his sheep, sometimes one of them would get lost. As a result, a shepherd would count his sheep each evening to make certain that the sheep were all there. In this parable, we see that a shepherd had lost one of his sheep. That was a serious problem because the only protection that a sheep has from the wolves is the protection provided by the shepherd. If a wolf finds a sheep alone, the wolf has lunch and the sheep is lunch. In contrast, if a wolf comes after a sheep that is with the shepherd, the shepherd will protect the sheep by killing the wolf. The same was true if a lion or a bear came after a sheep. In fact, David said to Saul in 1 Samuel 17:36, “Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” After Saul heard David say that, he allowed David to go and fight against Goliath.

In this parable, Jesus said that the shepherd would leave the other sheep and go and hunt for the sheep that was lost until he found the sheep. The word translated “leave” means *to depart from or to leave the other sheep behind*. The Jewish rabbis taught that God would only receive sinners if they were earnest enough in seeking His forgiveness. In contrast, Jesus made it clear by this parable and the next that it is God who seeks sinners instead of the sinners seeking Him. In Luke 19:9-10, Jesus said, “And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’” Jesus was speaking in that verse to Zacchaeus who was the chief tax collector in the city of Jericho after Jesus had found Zacchaeus up in a sycamore tree. Jesus was clearly seeking him.

Once the shepherd found the sheep, he would place the sheep on his shoulders and carry the sheep back to the flock. However, it is what the shepherd did after he returned home that is the important part of this parable. Jesus said that the man would call together his friends and neighbors and invite them to a celebration. The man would tell his friends and neighbors, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!” Here, we see that the man wanted the neighbors to rejoice with him because he had found his missing sheep. The word translated “rejoice” means *to congratulate or to take part in another’s joy*. The man wanted his friends and neighbors to share his joy.

Then, Jesus said, “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” Here, we see that just as the shepherd wanted his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him after he had found his sheep that in heaven there is great joy every time that a sinner repents. Later, both Peter and Paul preached this same message of repentance in the book of Acts. In Acts 3:19, Peter said, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Peter said that sins are blotted out when a person repents. In Acts 17:30, Paul said, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Paul said that this had been his message everywhere that he preached when he told Agrippa in Acts 26:20, “But declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to

God, and do works befitting repentance.” The repentance of any person causes joy in heaven.

Then, Jesus gave a second parable to illustrate this same truth. Luke 15:8-10 says, “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds *it*? And when she has found *it*, she calls *her* friends and neighbors together, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!” Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” In this second parable, we see that Jesus talked about a woman that had lost a silver coin.

The word translated “silver coin” was a Greek silver coin called a drachma. It was worth about the same amount as the Roman silver coin called a denarius. In Matthew 20:2, we read, “Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.” Here, we see that a denarius was the wages a vineyard owner agreed to pay to a person for working for a twelve-hour day in his vineyard. As a result, this woman had lost a coin that was worth an entire day’s wages.

This woman searched for this lost coin with the same diligence that the man had searched for his lost sheep. The kind of house that was most common among the Jews was a one-room house and everything was done in that one room. Usually, these houses did not have any windows, so they were fairly dark even during the daytime. Here, we see that the woman lighted a lamp so that she could search carefully. Then, she swept the entire house. We see that she kept searching carefully until she finally found the silver coin. We also see that the response of this woman was the same as the shepherd once she found her coin. She immediately invited her friends and neighbors for a celebration and said to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!” This statement was given in verse seven and is repeated in this verse. Again, we see the focus on the fact that there is joy when something that is lost is found.

Jesus said the same thing as He finished this parable that He said as He finished the first parable, “Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Many times, we fail to realize how both God and the angels respond when a person repents of their sin of unbelief and enters into the kingdom of God. In Genesis 41:32, Joseph explained to Pharaoh why God repeated something to him two times. That verse says, “And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.” Jesus wanted all of the people, including the scribes and Pharisees, as well as the tax collectors and sinners, to know that the repentance of even one person brings great joy in heaven. This was a tremendous encouragement to the tax collectors and sinners and a rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the great joy in heaven over any person that repents. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the joy that heaven experiences when a person repents.