

## The “Lost” Parables

Luke 15:1-32

If people really knew me, they would reject me. To avoid this risk, we often wear masks we think people will like. We hide who we really are, putting ourselves under constant strain. We often feel this same way about God. We think we are rejected and condemned rather than welcomed and loved. We do our best to please Him but feel that we will never measure up.

Make a list of descriptive words that paint an image of a God who is punitive and harsh. Now read aloud Luke 15:5 and 20. Make a contrasting list of descriptive words that illustrate this portrait of God. What thoughts and feelings do you have as you look at these two images of God?

In these three parables about lostness – the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son – Jesus sets us straight about God’s attitude toward sinners. The result is a startling picture of God. Read Luke 15:1-32

1. In these three parables, compare the way the Pharisees see “sinners” to the way Jesus says God sees them.

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2. Imagine yourself listening to these stories as a Pharisee. If you were able to hear Jesus, what thoughts and feelings might you have in response to these stories?

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3. Imagine yourself listening to these stories as one of the people the Pharisees called a “sinner.” If you were able to hear Jesus, what thoughts and feelings might you have in response to these stories?

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4. When reading stories or parables, it helps to imagine the sights, sounds, smells and feelings. What comes to mind when you read the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin (vv. 4-10)?

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5. Who is represented by the central characters (or objects) in each of the three parables?

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6. How do you account for the intense reactions of the shepherd, woman and father to their losses and discoveries?

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**7. Describe an incident when you lost or misplaced something valuable to you. How did you feel?**

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**8. Let's look more closely at the third parable. How might the Pharisees and teachers of the law have felt about each of the actions of the younger son (vv. 13-16)?**

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**9. How might the Pharisees have expected the father to respond when the son returned home?**

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**10. What do the details in verses 20-24 reveal about the feelings of our Father in heaven?**

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**11. How can this portrait of God help us to feel fully accepted by the Father – in spite of our sin?**

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**12. Instead of concluding the story in verse 24, Jesus goes on to describe the reaction of the older son (vv. 25-32). What additional point do you think Jesus wants to make to the Jewish leaders, and why?**

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**13. How can this parable motivate us to love those who are lost?**

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**14. Put yourself in these stories as the lost sheep and the lost son. Allow yourself to experience God's response to you. What thoughts and feelings do you have as you take in God's love?**