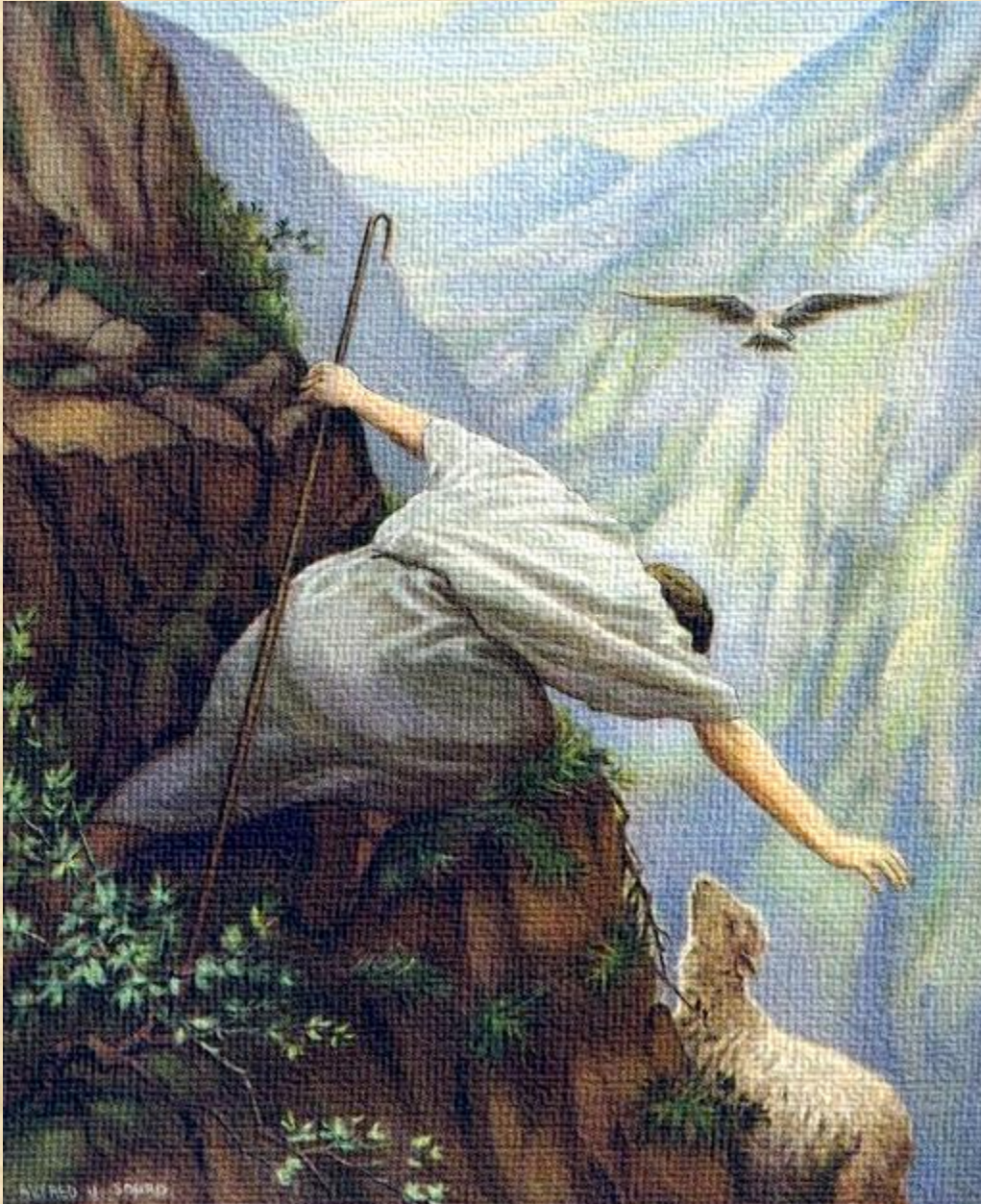


**THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #030**  
**A Chronological Study**

*"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and uttered things hidden since the creation of the world."*

Psalm 78:2<sup>[i]</sup>



**“The Lost” Luke 15:1-32**  
**The Lost Sheep :1-7**  
**The Lost Coin :8-10**  
**The Lost Sons “11-32**

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Please turn in your bibles to Luke chapter 15, and we'll explore three of Jesus' parables that all speak of the emotional quality of God's love for you and me. While we often proclaim God's love – we don't often think about how he FEELS towards us, His Children.

In the study of Jesus' parables I have found that what Jesus has to say in His parables is often some of the strongest commands He has to make to His four basic audiences. 1st - His disciples, 2nd - those who follow around after Him, 3rd - the Jewish religious leaders of His time, and 4th - we who follow Him in our own time.

In Luke Chapter 15 – We find that this single chapter in the book of Luke – contains three parables that are all about the same subject, but expressed in four different and important ways.

These Parables speak of the amazing Love of God for all those who belong to Him, and again, we'll spend some time focusing on how God FEELS about those who are His.

We'll also be exploring these three parables in terms of 1<sup>st</sup> - the Lost sinner, created by God, but not yet found. 2<sup>nd</sup> - The place of God's covenanted nation Israel, often lost found and lost again. 3<sup>rd</sup> - The place of you and I who were once lost and now found. And finally the place of the saved person who has become lost in their commitment to their precious heavenly Father.

Just a quick note about the background image on the screens. This is a picture of our galaxy by a satellite camera somewhere in our solar system. What do you see as you peer out into the space

of our universe – size becomes immense. Scientists tell us that our little planet is off on a lonely spiral arm of our Milky Way galaxy – which has over 100 billion stars in it. We're in a solar system right here in this galaxy with over 100 billion possible neighboring solar systems, and that's pretty amazing. But, then we're also told that our universe has more than 100 billion galaxies, each having 100 billion stars, most with solar systems. It looks to me like God has strategically placed US in a very far-off place, specifically designed for His purposes in choosing a select adopted family for His use and care in eternity. You might consider this the next time you happen to feel useless or unloved for the Love of God for the human race, you and I as individuals, is extraordinary.

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## **THE LOST**

A Shepherd with a lost sheep, a Woman with a lost coin, and a Father with two lost sons.

So we have three parables, with three owners (a Shepherd, a Woman, and a Father), each parable teaches a kind of emotion suffered by each of the owners. Important to this whole chapter is the concept that each of the lost subjects continue to be owned... even though lost.

First we'll look at three words that describe these three parables.

## **THE LOST SHEEP**

First there will be a lost Sheep. We'll look at the Shepherd's feeling of **Responsibility**.

## **THE LOST COIN**

Second there will be a lost Coin. We'll look at the Woman's feeling of **Value**.

## **THE LOST SONS**

Third there will be two lost Sons. And we'll look at the Father's feelings of **Relationship**.

## **THE BACKGROUND**

We have to ask the question: To whom is Jesus teaching these parables? The crowd that is following Him, mostly Jews, may be wearing on Him as this message is to them, as Jews and their current situation. They had been chosen by God to become His covenanted people. By covenanted we mean that God specifically chose them, the offspring of Abram (Abraham) and contracted them to be His people. Over the centuries they often rebelled and turned to idols. They were **chosen** by God to be mediators to the nations of their time into a believing and faithful relationship with God - but they failed in their task and because of that failure - they, as a nation, had become Lost and have been set aside (for a while).

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## **SETTING THE STAGE**

### **Luke 15:1-2**

***Now all the tax collectors and the sinners [non-religious Jews] were coming near Him to listen to Him. 2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."***

Luke sets the stage by telling us that the Jewish Pharisees and scribes had started to grumble audibly and publicly. They were angry because this Rabbi (teacher - Jesus) has been collecting hated tax collectors and sinners, and Jews who were not attenders or supporters of the Synagogue or the Oral Law - which was developed by the rabbinical system to replace the authority of God's Word. Since this was a mostly Jewish society, anyone who didn't support the Oral Law or the Synagogue (where it was taught) was considered unclean, and a dirty sinner - the very people Jesus was spending His time with.

So here's our setting for these three parables. Jesus is being hassled about fellowshiping with common sinners and tax collectors, and Jesus wants to tell His audience about God's unending love for those who willingly choose to love Him.

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## THE LOST SHEEP

:3-4

***So He told them this parable, saying, 4 "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture [Lit. wilderness] and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?"***

Our first parable, "The Lost Sheep" deals with a lost responsibility. The Sheep is the Shepherd's responsibility, He owns it, he feeds and waters it, he cares for it, in fact he cares for it so much that he will leave his other 99 sheep to go and look for it - because it has gone astray.

His audience would be largely farmers and many of them raise animals. The most numerous animals in any farmer's keep in that day would be sheep. So Jesus asks the question in order to set-up this parable.

"Which one of you," he asks directly to them. Jesus knows how to get their attention. "**Which one of you** wouldn't leave your flock and go to find and rescue the one who was lost?" Do you see the what Jesus said? This message is NOT about sheep. It's about the responsibility that God has in finding the one who is lost, and he needs to be found. The flock is not complete until the one who is **missing** is found and brought back to the flock... by **The Shepherd**.

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## THE RESULT

:5-6

***When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'***

What a savior He is! As the Shepherd, He has left the fold, searched the land, found the lost one, rescued it, and now takes him upon His shoulders to care for and carry him, and brings him back to the sheepfold. Then He calls everyone there and says to them, "Rejoice with **ME**, for **I** have found **MY** sheep, my person, who was lost."

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## THE RESULTING JOY

:7

***I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.***

It's here that we should see the heart of God. Jesus makes His disciples agree with the principle of going after the one who is lost, and then the joy of finding that one and bringing it back into the fold. But nowhere do we read that anyone listening received and believed His message. Jesus was telling them of God's love for lost Israel - and our lost world - and the responsibility of lovingly restoring that nation into the God's fold - and no one got it.

Oh what Joy there would have been in heaven if they had. When I look for an example of the wonderful joy in heaven, I am brought back to our Baptism services. I belong to a church body

who believes in believer immersion baptism. Into the water they go, all of us there watching, and then, "In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, I baptize you," and sploosh... the out of the water they come... and the crowd goes wild with great applause and cheering. Now picture all of heaven having great joy... because repentant Israel had returned home. But they didn't.

On another level we also don't want to lose the importance of the individual who is lost, and how God loves them. He will search and search until the one He owns, repents. Then God, the Shepherd, places them on His shoulders and brings them home.

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## THE LOST COIN

Our second parable, "The Lost Coin" concerns A lost Value.

Here we stop for a moment and consider some not so well known facts about this lost coin, and why is the key person in this parable a woman? Back in her day, one of the most major gifts, given as part of the wedding ceremony, was the giving of a silver necklace. At that time it had the same status as the wedding ring of today. In this particular case it was a necklace made with 10 Drachma coins. You've probably heard about the Denarii coin. That was a single coin worth a single day's wage, but a Drachma was considered to be, the price of a sheep – She was wearing the value of 10 sheep – a valuable necklace in her time. But of more importance is the **emotional value** of losing one of the coins of her wedding necklace. So Jesus uses this woman's emotional feeling of loss to get His point across to them and us.

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## A LOST VALUE

:8

***"Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin (Lit. 1 drachma, a day's wage), does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?"***

I'll tell you a brief experience at my home. About two years ago, my wife Joan lost her wedding ring somewhere on our property. She was emotionally devastated. At the time we had been married 46 years, and the loss of that ring meant everything to her. We searched everywhere, I even purchased a metal detector and went over our yard with it – to no avail. A year later one of our sons-in-law was visiting and asked to use the metal detector. After a few hours he came into the house with the ring. It was received by all with "Great Joy."

A lost value – that's what this is about. Consider the heart of God losing His precious covenanted people (His silver coin from the necklace), and again... how much rejoicing there would be in heaven upon their return to faithfulness – being put back in the necklace.

And again we must also consider the Value of the lost **individual** to God. Their lost condition is heartbreaking for Him. and **His** willingness to search for them... until found.

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## **REJOICE WITH ME**

**:9-10**

***When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."***



So what we are seeing here is the emotional value of this wonderful wedding gift – devastatingly lost, and then found with great joy. That’s how God feels.

The end of this parable tells it all. "The one who repents" is the key to this parable. The repentance (turning around) of the nation. It is this hoped for outcome that the angels of God rejoice over. The Individual who repents and is rejoined to Almighty God, Oh what rejoicing, for The value to God is inestimable!

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## **THE LOST SON #1**

And our third parable concerns A Lost Relationship - That story IS about a Father who allows His beloved youngest Son to leave and become lost to him – and then this Father will constantly watch for Him to return – because he has gone astray.

### **THE FATHER**

**:11**

***And He said, "A man had two sons.***

Jesus is telling His story about His heavenly Father and what He is like toward His children. These two sons have entirely different personal stories and we'll deal with them separately.

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## **THE YOUNGER SON**

**12-13**

***The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth (Lit. his living) between them. 13 And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a***

***distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.***

The first son in the story is the younger brother. He has become old enough, and unhappy enough, to go to his father and demand his share of his father's estate. We need to understand that, for whatever reason, he has chosen to not believe in continuing his relationship with his father. I suggest he might be in his early twenties, as that seems to be a pretty common thing at about that age. Too many rules, too much responsibility, a changing social structure - things like that. The father does as his son asks - and there is no comment by Jesus on just how the father **felt** about all this. We are left with waiting till the end of the story to see where the Father really stood.

Not having any particular world experience the son gathered up his stuff and left for a different country. It seems logical to me that the then Hebrew culture was pretty law and order oriented and leaving such a country would be just what a young man getting "out from under" would do.

Also without world experience... the young man "squandered" his estate with "loose living," -- "Ah, free from all those rules and difficult Jewish customs." -- I think many of us can identify with that period of our own lives, and perhaps our children and grandchildren as well.

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## **THE SON'S ERRORS**

### **14-16**

***Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. 15 So he went and hired himself out (Lit. was joined) to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the seed-***

***pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.***

The lack of adult knowledge allowed him to spend everything and not save or invest. When hard times fell he was not prepared to handle them.

To his disadvantage, famine struck... and he became impoverished (broke), and had to go to work for a Gentile who raised pigs and wound up eating the pig's food in order to survive... as no one was giving anything to him. A young, broke, well-to-do, Jewish lad with friends who abandoned him when his money ran out.

Now match this story to how Almighty God would feel if the nation of Israel was like this younger son. That they would recognize their failure and lostness.

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## **THE SON'S CHANGE OF DIRECTION**

**17-19**

***But when he came to his senses (Lit. himself), he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight (Lit. before you); 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"***

Do you remember, a few paragraphs ago, that we said, "We need to understand that, for whatever reason, he had chosen to not believe in continuing his relationship with his father."? Now we can understand the expression, "But when he came to his senses." He reminded himself about how good he had had it back in his father's care. Even his father's workers were well taken

care of. "Poor me, I'm starving here!" "I'm going home, at any cost!"

At that time, coming to his senses he says:

***AND I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."***

But he doesn't get a chance to say that to him right away! For...

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## **THE FATHER'S RESPONSE**

**:20**

***So he got up and came to his father (Lit. his own). But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him (Lit. fell on his neck) and kissed him.***

Overcome by the desire to be "home" again and under his father's care and blessing, he returns from that foreign country and as he approaches, being just in sight of his home..., his father sees him coming. Now, that tells us that his father was waiting and looking for him to return - without being told he would return. Thus is the nature of his father. Many fathers and mothers can relate to this moment. Oh, the hope of the return of a wayward child.

At that moment, his father feels... compassion... for his lost son and he ran to him (apparently foreign to an Old Testament Jewish father), and grabs him and hugs him, and kisses him. Such a grand reception for someone who went off "in a huff." Oh, that so many fathers would welcome their returning children with such affection and understanding. Difficult? Yes, but this father is very special.

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## THE SON'S REPENTANCE

:21

***And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'***

Now the son gets his chance to confess his wrongs. *"I have sinned against heaven,"* We see here that this son has come to the realization that his rebellious actions were actually against the holiness of God, and that it was done so in the sight of his own earthly father as well. He openly admits that, *"I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'* What a strong statement, and I don't think it is a statement made to acquire privilege, he just means it. He's spent half of his father's inheritance, lived with pigs and ate their food. *"Just not worthy to be your son."*

And so too it is with all those whom God's Holy Spirit works upon them while in their lost state. What have I done? I belong to Him. I've sinned in His sight, I'm not worthy. But, the Father comes running at the right moment.

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## THE LOVE OF THE FATHER DEMONSTRATED

:22-23

***But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;***

Without comment, his father honors his returned son, the best robe, a ring for his hand (perhaps a family signet ring), fresh clean sandals for his feet and then... a banquet in his honor! Wow, what a father he has - Wow, what a heavenly Father we have!

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## THE SON – LOST AND FOUND

:24

***for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.***

What a sentence this is! Here Jesus tells of His own death and how His Father loves and cares for Him upon His resurrection. *"This son of mine was dead and has come to life again; He was lost and has been found."* I wonder if Jesus had tears in His eyes as He said this.

It was, and perhaps still is, that in the Jewish culture if a child removed themselves from the care of their parents over some legal issue, the father would declare that son or daughter was "dead" to the family, and the separation could sometimes never heal.

This Father (Our Father) waits for our return to Him, takes us in His loving arms and hugs and holds us, and carries us into full fellowship upon our return - even when we come back feeling totally unworthy of His love...

**but then...**

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## THE OLDER SON

**:25-27**

***"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'***

The party has started without the older son's presence. As he returns home he learns of his wayward brother's return - and his father has "*received him back safe and sound.*" Now there's music and dancing...

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## THE ANGRY SON

**:28-29a**

***But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. 29 But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours (or disobeyed you);***

This parable puts the final cap on the three. Yes, we have been looking on how God loves his people, especially when they return from great spiritual difficulty. And now, if we look at this last portion and remember that Jesus was there in that wayward Israel in a final attempt, to bring that nation back into God's fold from their long held turned-away position from their God. And here is the older son (Israel) trying to persuade their father (Almighty God) of how faithful and responsible they were to Him.

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## **"THE SON OF YOURS"**

**:29b-30**

***and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; 30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth (Lit. living) with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'***

The older son's anger boils over at his father's love for the younger son.

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## **THE FATHER'S RESPONSE**

**:31-32**

***And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me (Lit. are always with me), and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"***

So here we can begin to focus in on the fuller meaning of the parable that Jesus is telling to the following crowd - a crowd that also contains Pharisees and men sent by them to find deadly fault with what Jesus is saying and doing. There are two kinds of people in the listening crowd - the message concerning the two sons. Those who will hear the clear message of repentance and salvation, and those who will refuse to enter into the fellowship of their God, their heavenly Father, and will instead be devoured by unforgiving anger.

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## OUR SUMMARY

As I look at the anger the older son experiences I see the long history of the religious leadership who constantly led their people down the lost trail of legalism.

On top of that is the list he reports: "I've been serving you, I've been obeying you," which, in terms of God's covenanted nation, they really never did faithfully. Then there is the "you never have given me..." when God had always shown Israel great gifts and blessings. And he closes with the, "But when THIS son of yours came home" you blessed Him and not me.

Can you see the Jewish religious leadership's growing anger and hostility represented here. The anger against their God for His love and rewards of the Younger Son - *who **"was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found."***

These three parables are about those who God already Owns and The one who OWNS this sheep will go after it until He finds it. Do you know one, a fellow believer who through sin is lost in his Christianity? Again, a believer cannot be unsaved, but they can become lost in their relationship and daily walk. If so, then you need to leave your comfort zone among all the others (who are not lost) to find this one. Why? For that is what Jesus did. He came here to find and rescue His sheep in this lost place - for each named one is that important to Him.

### **So we have Three parables:**

(1) One about Our God with the feelings of a Shepherd, a lost and then found Responsibility - The one Possessed by the heavenly Shepherd. Found by The Sheperd and returned by Him in great joy and celebration.

(2) One about a Our God with the feelings of a woman, a lost

and then found Value - The one Valued by the heavenly Father. Found and presented in great joy and celebration.

(3) And One about a Father with a lost relationship and a dead Son, who then Returned Alive and was embraced with great joy and celebration.

**Let us pray:** Heavenly Father we thank you for these three parables that show to us the great love you have for each one of us. Thank you for loving us when we were truly lost... and then found in the love of your Son Jesus.

And thank you for the great love you show us when we as believers have turned away from you... and You came looking for us and returned us to the fold.

And thank you for these parables which gracefully show us the picture of Jesus, the Savior, who on behalf of those who were lost, became dead and are now alive. May each of us learn these lessons well, for it is through them that we can learn of the great fellowship, value, joy and celebration for those who are Lost and then Found. We pray in the name of our Shepherd and Redeemer, Your Son Jesus. Amen.

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J. Deering [AncientPath.net] is the author and editor of this study.

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Jeremiah 18:15

"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

2023-11-09

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📖 All Scripture is taken from the New American Standard Bible, (NASB 1995)