

Stories from the book of Luke 14-18 : David Fuller, Ridley College

Session 1 - Saturday January 17

Luke 15: 1-10 "The Seeking God"

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹Tax collectors and "sinners" were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. ²So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."

³Then Jesus told them this parable:

⁴If any of you has 100 sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the 99 in the field and go and look for the lost sheep until you find it? ⁵And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder ⁶and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep."

⁸Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over 99 good people who don't need to."

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁹Jesus told the people another parable:

What will a woman do if she has ten silver coins and loses one of them? Won't she light a lamp, sweep the floor, and look carefully until she finds it? Then she will call in her friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found the coin I lost."

¹⁰Jesus said, "In the same way, God's angels are happy when even one person turns to him."

Notes:

- Pray for God's help and presence as you go through the questions opposite.
- Read the passage out loud as a group.

Questions:

1. Note carefully the first group of people who have gathered around to listen to Jesus (v.1). Why were such people attracted to Jesus?
2. Note carefully the second group of people who have gathered around to listen to Jesus (v.2). Why were they present and why does Jesus have them 'in his sights'?
3. What do these two parables tell us about the God of the Bible?
4. The two stories describe two types of 'lostness'. What might they be and do you know people like them? Using first names only (to protect privacy) pray for them as a group.
5. God rejoices over one sinner who repents. (v. 7, v.10). What is a sinner and what does it mean to repent?

Application:

List some practical implications that this passage has for us as disciples of Jesus Christ. E.g. Who are my friends? Am I seeking to take the gospel message outside of my comfort zone?

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Session 2 - Sunday January 18

Luke 15: 11-3 "The Welcoming God"

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus told them another parable:

Once a man had two sons. ¹² The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

¹³ Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴ He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat. ¹⁵ He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. ¹⁶ He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing. ¹⁷ Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! ¹⁸ I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I've sinned against God in heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I'm no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

²⁰ The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way away, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him. ²¹ The son said, "Father, I've sinned against God in heaven and against you. I'm no longer good enough to be called your son." ²² But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³ Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. ²⁴ This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate. ²⁵ The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?" ²⁷ The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." ²⁸ The older brother got so angry that he wouldn't even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. ²⁹ But he said to his father, "For years I've worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. ³⁰ This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast." ³¹ His father replied, "My son, you're always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be land and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he's now alive. He was lost and now has been found."

Notes:

- Continue by praying for God's help and presence by his Holy Spirit as you go through the passage and the questions below.
- Briefly review the previous session.
- Read the passage out loud as a group.

Questions:

1. Note carefully the three main characters in the story. (A father and his two sons.) Discuss briefly within your group the different parts that they play.
2. Note carefully again who is listening to Jesus as he tells this parable. What is Jesus' message to the tax collectors and "sinners"? What is Jesus' message to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law?
3. What does this parable tell us about the God of the Bible?
4. This story describes another type of 'lostness'. What might it be and do you know people who are in this state? Using first names only (to protect people's privacy) pray for them as a group
5. How does this story speak to us today? Does it speak to me and why? Do you relate to anyone in the story?

Application:

List the practical issues for us that emerge from this passage.

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Session 3 - Monday January 19

Luke 18: 9-17 "The Merciful God"

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

⁹ Jesus told a parable to some people who thought they were better than others and who looked down on everyone else:

¹⁰ Two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not greedy, dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people. And I'm really glad that I'm not like that tax collector over there. ¹² I go without eating for two days a week, and I give you one tenth of all I earn."

¹³ The tax collector stood off at a distance and didn't think he was good enough even to look up towards heaven. He was so sorry for what had done that he pounded his chest and prayed, "God, have pity on me! I'm such a sinner."

¹⁴ Then Jesus said, "When the two men went home, it was the tax collector and not the Pharisee who was pleasing to God. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured."

¹⁵ Some people brought their little children for Jesus to bless. But when his disciples saw them doing this, they told the people to stop bothering him. ¹⁶ So Jesus called the children over to him and said, "Let the children come to me! Don't try to stop them. People who are like these children belong to God's kingdom. ¹⁷ You will never get into God's kingdom unless you enter it like a child!"

Notes:

- Pray for God's help and guidance as you go through the passage and the questions opposite.
- Briefly review the previous session.
- Read the passage out loud as a group.

Questions:

1. Note carefully who Jesus has in mind when he uses this parable on his preaching tours. (Ch. 18 v. 9) How are the attitudes and behaviours displayed in v. 9 by the religious leaders of Jesus' time displayed today?
2. The Pharisee in the story shows all the marks of having a 'narcissistic religious faith'. What are these marks and can you also list some contemporary manifestations of the same attitude and conduct in our churches?
3. What do these two parables teach us about the God of the Bible?
4. What do these two parables teach us about human nature and about us gathered together this morning?
5. What do these two parables teach us about God's priorities and concerns?

Application:

List the practical issues for us that emerge from this passage.

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Session 4 - Tuesday January 20

Luke 16: 19-31 "The Warning God"

The Rich Man and Lazarus

¹⁹There was once a rich man who wore expensive clothes and every day ate the best food. ²⁰But a poor beggar named Lazarus was brought to the gate of the rich man's house. ²¹He was happy just to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. His body was covered with sores, and dogs kept coming up to lick them. ²²The poor man died, and angels took him to the place of honour next to Abraham.

The rich man also died and was buried. ²³He went to hell and was suffering terribly. When he looked up and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side, ²⁴he said to Abraham, "Have pity on me! Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and touch my tongue. I'm suffering terribly in this fire."

²⁵Abraham answered, "My friend, remember that while you lived, you had everything good, and Lazarus had everything bad. Now he is happy, and you are in pain. ²⁶And besides, there is a deep valley between us, and no one from either side can cross over."

²⁷But the rich man said, "Abraham, then please send Lazarus to my father's home. ²⁸Let him warn my five brothers, so they won't come to this horrible place."

²⁹Abraham answered, "Your brothers can read what Moses and the prophets wrote. They should pay attention to that."

³⁰Then the rich man said, "No, that's not enough. If only someone from the dead would go to them, they would listen and turn to God."

³¹So Abraham said, "If they won't pay attention to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even to someone who comes back from the dead."

Notes:

- Pray for God's help and guidance as you go through the passage and the questions opposite.
- Briefly review the previous session.
- Read the passage out loud as a group.

Questions:

1. Note carefully who this parable is directed towards. (Ch. 16 v. 1) and who is still in the background (v. 14). Note carefully the themes of the parables that precede this story (vv. 1-18). What are they about?
2. What are the two great impediments to discipleship that Jesus speaks of in the gospels? How do these 'impediments' affect our responsiveness to the call to be a disciple?
3. What does this parable teach us about the God of the Bible?
4. What does this parable teach us about human nature? How is this parable a warning to the Church and to us?

Application:

List the practical issues for us that emerge from this passage.

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Session 5 - Wednesday January 21

Luke 14: 25-35 "The Costly God"

The Cost of Being a Disciple

²⁵ Large crowds were walking along with Jesus, when he turned and said:

²⁶ You can't be my disciple, unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and children, and your brothers and sisters. You can't come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life.

²⁷ You can't be my disciple unless you carry your own cross and come with me.

²⁸ Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. What is the first thing you will do? Won't you sit down and work out how much it will cost and if you have enough money to pay for it? ²⁹ Otherwise, you will start building the tower, but not be able to finish. Then everyone who sees what is happening will laugh at you. ³⁰ They will say, "You started building, but couldn't finish the job."

³¹ What will a king do if he has only 10,000 soldiers to defend himself against a king who is about to attack him with 20,000 soldiers? Before he goes out to battle, won't he first sit down and decide if he can win? ³² If he thinks he won't be able to defend himself, he will send messengers and ask for peace while the other king is still a long way off. ³³ So then, you can't be my disciples unless you give away everything you own.

³⁴ Salt is good, but if it no longer tastes like salt, how can it be made to taste salty again? ³⁵ It is no longer good for the soil or even for the manure pile. People simply throw it out. If you have ears, pay attention!

Notes:

- Pray for God's help and guidance as you go through the passage and the questions opposite.
- Briefly review the previous session.
- Read the passage out loud as a group.

Questions:

1. Note carefully who Jesus is speaking to (v 25). Surely Jesus is not serious in v 26 & v 33! Whatever does he mean?
2. Jesus describes discipleship with a very potent image in v 27. What did it mean for the original hearers and what might it mean today?
3. Jesus calls us to 'count the cost' (vv 28-32) before we embark on the sometimes difficult path of discipleship. What have been the implications of this for people we know and how may it have already impacted on us?
4. What does this episode in Jesus' teaching tell us about the nature of God?
5. Salt is good (v 34). You are the Salt of the Earth (Matt 5:13). Describe what it means to be 'salty in our day and time'?

Application:

List the practical issues for us that emerge from this passage.