

THE PARABLES OF MERCY ~ THE LOST SHEEP LUKE 15:3-7

LUKE 15: 1-2

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

LUKE 15: 3-7

So he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.'

REFLECTION:

Consider:

- ❖ **How is God imaged in this parable? What thoughts and feelings do you have about this image?**
- ❖ **What does the "God" figure do/say?**
- ❖ **How is the "lost one" imaged and why do you think the "lost one" is imaged this way?**
- ❖ **What does the "lost one" do/say?**
- ❖ **How is repentance reflected in this parable?**

Reflecting on the image:

In this parable, Jesus invites his listeners to reflect on God's mercy for the 'lost'. Using the image of a single lost sheep from a flock of one hundred, he skilfully illustrates God's loving and persevering search for those who have lost their way or who have made a mess of their lives.

In this image we see a parent carrying a 'lost daughter', one who has made a mess of her life and who is in need of the embrace of forgiveness, tenderness and mercy.

Spend some time with this image and begin to relate it to your own life. When have you been invited to embrace and forgive someone who has lost their way? How has your life revealed the tenderness of God's mercy?

Praying with the image:

Ponder these words as an expression of the tenderness of God's mercy:

The more I called them, the more they went from me; ... Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.

~ Hosea 11: 2, 3-4



'Blue Prodigal' by Charlie Mackesy

THE PARABLES OF MERCY
~ THE LOST COIN
LUKE 15: 8-10

LUKE 15: 1-2

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

LUKE 15: 8-10

'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

REFLECTION:

Consider:

- ❖ **How is God imaged in this parable? What thoughts and feelings do you have about this image?**
- ❖ **What does the "God" figure do/say?**
- ❖ **How is the "lost one" imaged and why do you think the "lost one" is imaged this way?**
- ❖ **What does the "lost one" do/say?**
- ❖ **How is repentance reflected in this parable?**



"The Lost Coin" by Eugene Burnand

Reflecting on the image:

In this parable, Jesus uses the image of a woman to portray God's mercy. The coin she lost, a drachma, was the equivalent of a day's wage. So, as small as this coin might seem, it was very precious and held a great value for her. In this image, the woman is announcing her good news to the neighbourhood. Her face reveals something of the exhaustion and intensity of the search she had undertaken, as well as the relief and joy she feels at having found what was lost. Spend some time with this image and begin to relate it to your own life. When have you felt lost or in a dark place? When have you experienced the mercy of God 'sweeping' you out of that dark corner?

Praying with the image:

Ponder these words as an expression of God's loving mercy: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you. —ISAIAH 43:1—2, 4

THE PARABLES OF MERCY

~ THE LOST SON

LUKE 15: 11-24

LUKE 15: 1-2

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

LUKE 15: 11-24

Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

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- ❖ **What does the “lost one” do/say?**
- ❖ **How is repentance reflected in this parable?**

Reflecting on the image:

In this parable, Jesus uses the image of a father’s love to illustrate God’s mercy. The human bond between a father and son is one that reaches deep into the heart. It’s a love that is often beyond words.

In this image, the son that was ‘lost’ has begun to turn his life around. From his place of deepest darkness and shame, he returns to the embrace of his father’s love.

Spend some time with this image and begin to relate it to your own life. Look at the father’s hands, as the son collapses into his arms, and see the unconditional warmth of his embrace. Recognise the patience and mercy in the figure of the father. When have you experienced such mercy?



'Forgiving Father' by Frank Wesley

Praying with the image:

Pray the following from the official Prayer for the Year of Mercy: Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

—POPE FRANCIS

THE PARABLES OF MERCY
~ THE LOST BROTHER
LUKE 15: 25-32

LUKE 15: 1-2

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

LUKE 15: 25-32

'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." '

REFLECTION:

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- ❖ **How is repentance reflected in this parable?**



"The Prodigal Son" by

Reflecting on the image:

We often overlook the brother of the Lost Son. He too is lost. You can see that in this image. He, who has been faithful and good to his father, is now overlooked in the celebrations for his younger brother.

Notice the brother's stance. His facial expression. His hands. When have you looked for justice, not mercy?

Praying with the image:

Pray the following: Lord God, you know what I am and where I belong. Have mercy upon me and strengthen me, that I may not, through weakness, stay in the darkness. Lead me out into the light; and may I find my way and be contented with it. Amen.