

LISTENERS AND THE MURMURERS

Luke 15

The tax-gatherers and sinners are set in contrast to the Pharisees and scribes as Jesus "receives" (*prosdechomai*) those drawing near to listen. The former couldn't get enough information while the latter had quite enough. Our Lord told "THIS" one parable dealing with this situation. "THIS" parable is surely used to totally shock those grumblers. It is an inversion (up-side-down) or "out-of-harmony" with the reality of Jewish social life.

It is not really about shepherds, women, or fathers losing sheep, coins or sons; rather it is about God losing mankind to Satan and establishing our value as 1 out of 100, 1 out of 10, 1 out of 2 and finally 1 out of 1. He sent his Son for listeners as well as murmurers.

A. The lost sheep (1 out of 100) verses 4 to 7. It is truly a shock for the murmurers to hear Jesus indicating that they would be a low-life (hireling) shepherd over someone else's sheep, placing themselves at personal risk. Jesus risked it all when came into this world.

The good shepherd is clearly seen here risking all at the cross for "one". The grumblers could have at least rejoiced.

B. The lost coin (1 out of 10) verses 8 to 10. A sharp insult would be felt by those religious Jews over Jesus speaking about, or to a woman in public (John 4:9, 27). Men of any kind associating with women in public was completely unheard of. But the Savior so loved the world... This is a very non-standard lesson. The coin, representing the sinners, was "all" that the woman, or God, had. We're all that God has in the largest world ever. A bright shiny coin (soul) falls into the filth of sin. It will take "the light of the world" (John 8:12) to find a precious soul in the blackness of iniquity. God lit the light of the world and then sent Jesus. The lamp represented the light of the world.

C. The lost Son (1 out of 2) verses 11 to 24. Christ shows anti-cultural tones when inferring that any Jewish father would divide up his wealth before death. Notice the son going to a foreign country and "attaching" himself to Gentiles in order to feed pigs? Certainly, in reality, not! This section is about tax-gatherers and sinners leaving God to do their own wicked thing.

The son comes to his senses and reasons and acts out his repentance as he returns home. The heavenly Father humiliated himself (Heb. 12:2) as few Jewish fathers ever do by "running" to meet his son in order to "receive" him back.

D. The other lost son (1 out of 1) verses 25 to 32. What? Were there two lost sons? The elder son represents those murmurers! In pure Jewish style, this eldest boy would definitely have been in the house, seated at the father's right hand side. Odd. See the inversion? Servants need to inform older son of household affairs? Odd.

The older child is as angry as those grumblers were at Jesus. They both disowned their brethren. They both desired a place in the father's house, but never desired a place in their father's heart. The father humiliated himself again by going out to the elder son. Begging children to come into the feast to dine? This would NEVER EVER happen!

It was a shame to be a shepherd, a shame to be a woman, and a shame to be a humiliated father. It was a shame for Jesus to come to us in a stable and hang on a cross and be buried in a borrowed tomb.

The further shame is that this is the only parable that is unfinished in all of the Bible. What became of the elder son? What will become of you?