

## Going Deeper – 7/18/2021 – Fawn Cobler – Luke 15:11-32 – The Parable of the Lost Son



When I attended college in the middle 1970's, there were a number of older students in my theology classes. These were people who left high school and sought the hippy lifestyle, celebrating personal expression, drug experimentation and easy sexuality. When they became disillusioned with that, or found themselves lost and in darkness, they encountered the light of God during the Jesus Movement and had a complete conversion, a complete turning around. Some of these people came to the campus where I was studying to devote themselves to ministry and sharing the love and grace of God that they had experienced. Those of us who grew up in Jesus found a huge contrast between ourselves and these happy, glowing-faced, lovers of Jesus who could not stop talking about him. We felt like we were among the 99 sheep that had always been with Jesus and we did not know the incredible joy of being the lost one that Jesus went out seeking and rejoiced when he was found. We wondered if we needed to go out and live a sinful lifestyle to be able to appreciate what Jesus has done for us and experience the joy of salvation on a deeper level. In some ways we were like the son that stayed home in the parable of the lost son, and they were like the one that went out and squandered their inheritance and came home willing to be a servant but embraced and celebrated by his father.

- Do you identify with the lost son or the one who stayed with his father?
- Has there been a time in your life that you experienced a "first love" for Jesus when you were so excited about what he has done for you that you could not stop talking about him?
- Is it possible to generate that kind of passionate love for Jesus? What would it take for you to comprehend the Father's love for you that the lost son experienced when he returned home?

Tess

Pastor Fawn Cobler spoke from the passage that we commonly refer to as the story of the Prodigal Son. She challenged us to see the story from a new perspective. There are really two lost sons in this story. Both lost but in different ways. Look at the context of the parable of the lost sons. The story of the lost sheep is followed by the story of the lost coin, which in turn is followed by the story of the lost son(s). Luke places these parables in the context of scribes/pharisees grumbling about Jesus associating with "sinners".

- Read Luke 15:1-3. To whom is Jesus telling these parables?
- Reflect on each parable and consider how it displays God's heart.

I admit I relate mostly with the older son that is indignant that his brother has squandered his inheritance; but if I don't grasp God's scandalous mercy and love for the screwup, younger son, I miss understanding God. The lost son parable I believe is directed primarily at the religious establishment when you read it in context. The older son symbolizes the scribes & pharisees. In this case they fail to recognize their need for relation with their creator. I think if we understand this parable only seeing the failure of the younger son we have fallen into the same trap as the Scribes and Pharisees. In the "lost" son(s) parable I think Jesus is reaching out to the scribes and pharisees. We are never told how they reacted. The problem may be that they never saw themselves in this parable. Would they ever have seen themselves as lost sheep? I doubt it; they had their act together... kept the commandments and religious traditions. Did they understand their value to God? Probably not.... might have thought God was lucky to have them on His team. I'd guess they never saw themselves in any of these parables! This could be our problem as well.

Dave

- Describe your relationship with God the Father and how you are affected by his gift of grace and salvation.
- How do you want to experience Jesus in your daily life? What would you need to change to experience the joy of the lost sheep that was found, or the woman who found her missing coin, or the reprobate son that returned to find his father's open and accepting arms wrapped around him?