

Come Follow Me  
Elo Viz production  
Week 19  
Luke 12-17, John 11

In Luke 15 Jesus gives three parables, the most famous of which is the parable of the prodigal son. However, to truly understand what Jesus is teaching in the prodigal son, all three parables must be read and understood together. For the message in all three are the same; someone is lost, someone precious and is found and all rejoice over its return. The only difference is that in the parable of the lost sheep; the sheep knows it's lost, but doesn't know how to get back. In the parable of the lost coin; the coin doesn't know that it's lost. And in the parable of the prodigal son; the son knows he's lost and doesn't want to be found. This should include about everybody that has ever lived or will live in this created world.

One more difference to point out, just something to ponder on as you do your studying this week. In the first two parables of the sheep and the coin, both times the shepherd and the woman drop what they are doing and go after and search. The shepherd leaves the 99 sheep to search for the lost one. The woman drops what she is doing to turn the house upside down to find the missing coin. But, in the parable of the prodigal son, the father stays home. No one goes after the son...

So, let's dive in. We are going to be focusing on the story of the prodigal sons. Yes, you heard correctly, I said prodigal sons, (plural with an s). I say this because both sons are lost and both need to find their way back. And, this was Jesus's intention to point out because he starts the parable with this line:

"A certain man had two sons" (Luke 15:11)

"<sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of **goods** that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living." (Luke 15:12)

What's happening here is very important to understand. Back in the days of Jesus, when a father has sons, after his passing, meaning when he dies; all that he has is divided among his sons. In this case it would be split into three parts. A third for the younger son and two thirds for the eldest son. The reason the eldest son got a double portion is because he was to stay there and take care of his mother and sisters with the extra inheritance he received. And, what else is interesting is that the younger son approaches his father and asks for his inheritance now. For a son to say this to his father was the most rude and disrespectful thing any son could say to his father. Basically what he is saying is "I wish you were dead". Give me what I am owed as if you had already died. In that culture everyone around Jesus would have gasped in disgust that a son would say that to his father. And, it was a punishable offense. One so serious that if a son said that to his father it was lawful for that son to be stoned to death.

It's also important to know that these people were not rich in cash. It's not likely that the father wrote his son a check and he went down to the local bank and cashed it. No, in that day all they owned that was of value was land and flocks. So in order for the father to give his son what he asked for it would have meant two things. First, the father had to sell a portion of his fields in order to get the money for his son. This process would have taken some time and also caused much embarrassment for himself and brought disgrace on his family. The second effect of this decision by the son is that, by the father selling a third of his land it would have affected his livelihood. They lived off the land, they would have had fields for food or ran their herds and cattle on the land. So it wasn't just that this son's actions would have taken some of the family wealth, it was that it impacted all that lived in the household and their ability to provide for themselves.

I'm sure you could imagine the feelings of anger and rage that were welling up inside these people standing around Jesus as he illustrated this parable. This was unheard of, the worst thing any son to do to their family. But wait, it gets worse...Jesus goes on.

“13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there **wasted** his **substance** with **riotous** living. (Luke 15:13)

Most scholars believe that this son was around the age of 18. That he was done living under his fathers rules and didnt have any desire to be a farmer. So he spent all his money on “riotous living”. Later the elder son explains that it was used for harlots or prostitutes. Again, we can imagine another gasp of disgust from the crowd listening to Jesus. But wait. He's not done yet.

“14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.” (Luke 15:14-15)

From what we know those listening to the parable given by Jesus were publicans, sinners, Pharisees and scribes. A large portion of which would have been of the jewish faith. Meaning that they believed that certain animals were unclean. Including pigs. It was against all Jewish law to touch or be around any unclean thing. So for this son to be eating out of the same trough as the swine was unconscionable. If this youngman would have been a real person standing beside Jesus it would have been a curtain death with His audience that was in attendance.

This was Jesus's intention. He is describing a son that everyone there would have reason to condemn. They would have been so angry that the worse demise of this boy would have brought the most satisfaction to their souls.

So, Jesus continues. This youngman, came to himself. Realizing that even his fathers hired servants are better off than him. Humbling himself to realize that he is not worthy to be called his fathers son. But he worked in the field before maybe, just maybe this father would hire him as a servant.

What does Jesus mean by this? That he came to himself. Well, there is an eternal truth that; the further you remove yourself from the father the more you will be confused about your true identity. We can see that in the world today. With the identity crisis. The further you remove yourself from the father the more confused you will be about your true identity. This boy was always the son of the father. But as he wanders off he hopes that maybe he could come back to be a hired servant. Even though the son lost sight of who he was, the Father never did.

“<sup>20</sup> And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had [compassion](#), and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”  
(luke 15:20)

This scene is one of grace and compassion. For the father to see his son from a great way off this would imply that he was looking for him. Searching the horizon day after day. Month after month, year after year, hoping, longing, searching for his son's return. Then one day, finally, He sees a figure coming down the road. His son, at last was returning. So he runs to him. And fell on his neck and kissed him. All three of these actions from the father showed the crowd that this father wanted nothing more than for his son to return. The Elderly did not run in that day. It was disgraceful.

Mary Lyman wrote a moving poem about this scene titled “to any who have watched for a son’s returning”. It goes like this:

*“He watched his son gather all the goods  
that were his lot,  
anxious to be gone from tending flocks,  
the dullness of the fields.*

*He stood by the olive tree gate long  
after the caravan disappeared  
where the road climbs the hills  
on the far side of the valley,  
into infinity.*

*Through changing seasons he spent the light  
in a great chair, facing the far country,  
and that speck of road on the horizon.*

*Mocking friends: "He will not come."*

*Whispering servants: "The old man  
has lost his senses."*

*A chiding son: "You should not have let him go."*

*A grieving wife: "You need rest and sleep."*

*She covered his drooping shoulders,  
his callused knees, when east winds blew chill, until that day . . .  
A form familiar, even at infinity,  
in shreds, alone, stumbling over pebbles.*

*"When he was a great way off,  
His father saw him,  
and had compassion, and ran,  
and fell on his neck, and kissed him." (Luke 15:20)*

*[Ensign, March 1983, p. 63]*

We don't have time to cover the journey of the other prodigal son, the eldest son. But it is obvious to see that they were both lost. They were both using their father. The younger used his father in evil ways to commit sin. The elder son used his father in righteous ways to commit sin. Saying in essence: I have been good, I have been loyal, I deserve all that you gave to another. I earned my way into heaven. Jesus, looking deep into the eyes of the pharisees. Explaining that both those boys were lost. Both of them are just like us at various times in our lives.

We see scores of examples from so many in the scriptures. From Alma the younger, Paul, and even one in the audience with Jesus that day; Simon Peter. Elder Holland sharing a portion of President Hinckley's talk said:

*"My heart goes out to Peter. So many of us are so much like him. We pledge our loyalty; we affirm our determination to be of good courage; we declare, sometimes even publicly, that come what may we will do the right thing, that we will stand for the right cause, that we will be true to ourselves and to others.*

*Then the pressures begin to build. Sometimes these are social pressures. Sometimes they are personal appetites. Sometimes they are false ambitions. There is a weakening of the will. There is a softening of discipline. There is capitulation. And then there is remorse, self-accusation, and bitter tears of regret.*

Well, if Peter's story were to have ended there, with him cursing and swearing and saying, "I know not the man," surely his would be among the most pathetic in all scripture.

But Peter came back.

He squared his shoulders and stiffened his resolve and made up for lost ground. He took command of a frightened little band of Church members. He preached such a moving sermon on the day of Pentecost that three thousand in the audience applied for baptism. Days later five thousand heard him and were baptized. With John, he healed the lame man at the gate of the temple. Faith in Peter's faith brought the sick into the streets on their beds of affliction "that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them" ([Acts 5:15](#)). He fearlessly spoke for his brethren when they were arraigned before the Sanhedrin and when they were cast into prison. He entertained angels and received the vision that led to carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. He became in every sense the rock Christ promised he would be. Of such a life President Hinckley said:

*I pray that you may draw comfort and resolution from the example of Peter who, though he had walked daily with Jesus, in an hour of extremity denied both the Lord and the testimony which he carried in his own heart. But he rose above this, and became a mighty defender and a powerful advocate. So too, there is a way for you to turn about and . . . [build] the kingdom of God. [["And Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly,"](#) *Ensign*, May 1979, pp. 65–67]*

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland/robe-ring-fatted-calf/>

As we study this parable of the prodigal this week may we see ourselves in each of these characters. How we emulate them in our own way. May we recognize it and have the strength to change it. Is my humble prayer.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.