

Soul Value (Part 2)

“And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?” (Matthew 16:26, *NLT*).

Evangelism is our main concern. Proclaim the gospel. Win the lost to Christ. Bringing someone to Him requires time, effort, and financial investment. Is it worth it? Jesus thought so. I refer to Luke 15 as “The Lost Chapter.” Notice it follows the “God of the Full House” account. “And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them, to come in that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). Luke 15 tells three short stories of things lost. The discerning reader will even find a fourth. The chart that follows reveals things lost and the value they represented.

Things Lost	Things Represented:
Lost Lamb	Livelihood
Lost Coin	Life’s Savings
Lost Son	A family’s investment in a life

Jesus gave these parables in response to sharp criticism from scribes and Pharisees. They were shocked that Jesus spent so much time with sinners and ate with them. They gave Him a tough time. They reasoned, “You can tell the character of a man by looking at the company he keeps!” “You show me your friends and I’ll show you what type of person you are.” This chapter highlights our invitation to rejoice with God as sinners are reached; and to follow the Master’s example in aggressively seeking for the lost. The religious leaders had missed the point because of their maintenance mindset: *Sinners were those Jesus came to reach*. He recognized their soul value and sought to reclaim them for the kingdom. They embodied His purpose in dropping into our world. He came for those that needed help. The following chart represents the needs unveiled in “The Lost Chapter.”

Lost Sheep	Out of safety	Needed a shepherd
Lost Coin	Out of circulation	Needed to be put back into circulation
Lost Son	Out of fellowship	Needed to be in fellowship with the Father. (Adapted from Warren Wiersbe’s <i>Expository Outlines on the New Testament</i>)

Jesus set his listeners up. “Wouldn't you leave...and *go* after the lost one *until* you found it?” (Luke 15:4, *MSG, Emphasis Mine*). The answer was obvious to the spectators. In each of the three stories someone searched non-stop for the lost. We give up too easily. God, give us a spirit of endurance and diligence. Some of us are naïve enough to think that the lost should find their own way into the church. That has never been the biblical imperative. We are repeatedly admonished to, “Go!”

Each of the three stories has the following in common:

- ❖ Something Lost
- ❖ Something Sought
- ❖ Something Found
- ❖ Something Celebrated

Dr. Neil Chadwick in his sermon “Lost and Found” said, “The value of a particular item can be determined according to the amount of effort invested in finding it, if and when it becomes lost.” The emphasis in each story is not on the time it takes to find the lost, but on the value of it.

Just like the Shepherd going out into the night searching for the lost sheep, Jesus vigorously and tirelessly seeks lost souls. He expects more than our silent witness.

The lady looking thoroughly for her lost coin reminds us our search is for something valuable and costly. She used what she had. We often think we need special equipment or resources to be evangelistic. Just use what you’ve got. The woman took a candle, providing light, to increase her chances of seeing. She also used her broom to carefully sweep the vicinity. She continued to “seek diligently” until she found her valued possession (Luke 15:8).

The third story—my favorite--refers to the prodigal son. The *NIV* is more specific when it calls him the “lost son.” He takes his inheritance, spends it on worldly living, comes to himself, and returns home. In him we clearly see the basic state of mankind: rebellious and disobedient. “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son” (Luke 15:21, *NIV*). The lost son thought his value had decreased because of his sinful actions. The loving father is God and is depicted as waiting, watching, running, embracing, kissing, and rejoicing. Christianity is the only world religion that has such a loving Father who enthusiastically seeks men. The elder brother, out of touch with his father’s heartbeat, is compared to the Pharisees. His father reasoned, “But it was fitting to make merry, to revel and

feast and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!” (Luke 15:32, *AMP*). We can hear His heart beating throughout Scripture as we read about Him saving lost souls. He is moved to compassion as He looks over a gone astray world. Evangelism is the heartbeat of God. His desire is that none of His children be lost.

“Rejoice with me...I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10, *NIV*). He didn’t specifically say angels are partying, but there is rejoicing “in the presence of the angels.” Conceivably, you have read these verses and imagined the angels breaking into a praise dance. Maybe they are. But, if the angels are not the ones rejoicing, who is? It is our caring, heavenly Father. Add to this the possibility of a wider crowd—the saints that have gone before and the great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1). One thing for sure, God celebrates when a lost soul repents; turning from the wrong path to the right one. And anything that makes God happy makes me happy too. Every service should be a celebration when we see someone repent, being baptized in Jesus name, or being filled with the Holy Ghost. Heaven is standing by. God is ready for a divine party. All that is needed is for a lost soul to be found.

Below is a summary of the conditions found in each of the narratives:

Sheep	Lost through ignorance	Lost, knew it was lost; didn’t know its way home.
Coin	Lost through carelessness or neglect of others	Lost, didn’t know it was lost; didn’t know its way home.
Son	Lost through his own willfulness	Lost, knew he was lost; knew his way home.

Reading through Luke 15 have you determined how you fit into the stories? Here’s how.

- ❖ Become the shepherd searching for the frightened lost lamb.
- ❖ Become the woman, lighting the candle of the gospel, searching for the coin insignificant to others.
- ❖ Become like the loving father anxiously praying, waiting and watching for the lost son’s return home. Get in touch with your Dad’s heartbeat!

Vance Havner wrote of the Titanic that sank in 1912. Remember, it was reputed to be unsinkable. "The only thing it ever did was sink."

In the end, all distinctions are set aside. It all comes down to – lost or saved. Or should I say, lost or found.

Departing from England it had all sorts of passengers aboard. There were millionaires, celebrities, middle income earners, and even poor folks. There were people from all walks of life. But a few hours after the historical disaster, when they published a list in New York, it carried only two categories—lost and saved.

Study Questions

1. List the three (3) lost things found in Luke chapter 15, and the value they represented.
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____

2. Given the list of "lost things" found in Luke chapter 15, write what each of them needed.
1) Lost sheep – out of safety _____
2) Lost coin – out of circulation _____
3) Lost son – out of fellowship _____

3. List the four (4) things each of the three stories in Luke chapter 15 have in common.
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

4. List three ways it is possible for us to become part of the three stories found in Luke chapter 15.
1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

