

The Parable of Redemptive Joy

Luke 15:1-10

October 10, 2021

Well, we are back in Luke 15 this week and this time looking at the theme of redemptive joy in the first two parables. Jesus gives a, as you know, a series of three parables here in Luke 15: the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son. The three of these parables are directed at the Pharisees and the scribes because of their, well, we just call it a poor reaction to the salvation of sinners rather than rejoicing over the salvation of sinners, which really is the only fitting response. They grumbled and they criticized. They tried to turn others against him, so Jesus confronts their sinful attitude with these three parables.

We'll look at the first two of them today, starting in verse 1. Let's read the text, Luke 15, "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and

eats with them.' So, he told them this parable, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after," the, "the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. When he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, 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 persons who need no repentance.

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

The most striking feature of these two parables, and it's couched in the most common of metaphors, is the love of God for lost sinners. God loves his people. He loves them. He set his

affections upon them from before the foundation of the world, and he rejoices to execute all his good pleasure and do his perfect will. He freely pardons his people from all their sins, because, as we've been singing about this morning, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, he laid down his life for the sheep. In love, God is like a shepherd who has compassion for a lost sheep. Every single lost sheep matters to him. He knows the gravity of the danger that a lost sheep is in. So, he goes after the lost sinner until he finds him. In love, God is like a woman who so values this lost coin. So, she searches for it diligently and exhaustively until she finds that lost coin, and God is the same with the lost sinner. He will seek and save the lost. He never stops until he reclaims his own.

So, the theme that we want to consider today is the fact that God's love is not coerced in any way. He's not reluctant about loving us. He's not forced to love us. He has made a free, sovereign choice of his people. He is compelled by nothing but his free choice, the good pleasure of his purpose in redemption, and all of that, to the praise of his glorious grace.

If we put this plainly about what we're going to see this morning, God delights to love us. God delights to love us and then he rejoices to do his will, which is to save us, to redeem us from all of our sins. And Jesus Christ is the one who executes that plan of redemption. He's the one who does the father's will. According to Psalm 40, it says, this is Jesus speaking, it's prophetically, it's a prophetic Scripture, pointing to the Messiah's work, "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'"

Jesus too, he, like the father, he delights in the love of God for sinners, he rejoices to do God's will to seek and save that which is lost. And, though it cost him dearly, at the price of his shed blood, he rejoiced. Hebrews 12:2, "For the joy that was set before him," he, "endured the cross, despising the shame." We can see from the wrap up, the summary of each parable, verse 7, verse 10, all of Heaven rejoices in the accomplishment of God's will. All of Heaven responds in joy to what God has done in the salvation of lowly sinners, to seek the lost and to find them.

The question before us today as we get into this section a second time, as we have a second pass through these two parables, the question we want to put before ourselves today, because this is really the point of these two parables, we want to ask ourselves, am I more like the Pharisees, having a tendency to grumble and complain in our spirits? Have a tendency to be critical or am I more like God's friends, rejoicing over the thing that really matters, which is the salvation of lost souls? Is my soul, on the one hand, poisoned with complaint? Do I have a darkened soul of criticism and bitterness? Or does my soul burst forth with the joy of God in the rescue of lost sinners?

To help us answer those questions, let's consider what I see in the text, here, are four affections of those who share in divine joy. Four affections for those who share in divine joy. Those who share in God's joy in the salvation of sinners, they're characterized by these four affections. Let me give you the first one.

Ask yourself, do you have, number one, righteous affections? Do you have righteous affections? That is, are your

affections, are your internal affections lined up with what is right, with what is appropriate, with what is fitting? The substance of the Pharisees' complaint there in Luke 15:2 is that Jesus is keeping company with the deplorables, with the unlovelies, with the unclean sinners. They couldn't countenance him welcoming sinners, letting them draw near, or even worse, sharing table fellowship with them by eating a meal. That was, that was unconscionable to them. That was beyond the pale. It was appalling for them. It was offensive.

The Pharisees stayed far away from sinners. They were separate from the defiled and the unclean. They even used to rehearse prayers of their loathing. Joachim Jeremias gives us an actual 1st century prayer prayed by the Pharisees. It goes like this. "I thank you, Lord, my God, that you have set my portion with those who sit in the sanctuary and not with those who sit on the street corners. I rise early and they rise early. I rise to attend the word of Torah, they to attend to futile things. I exert myself, and they exert themselves. I exert myself and receive a reward, they exert themselves to receive no reward. I run and they run. I run i, run to life in the world to come, and they run to the pit of destruction."

It's the same sentiment we hear, actually, from the Pharisee who prayed in the temple. Jesus portrays him in Luke 18:11, saying, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even this tax collector." When he says that he's not making it up for the point of a parable. He's heard that language among the Pharisees in the temple. They were self-righteous to the extreme. They separated themselves from sinners so they didn't get any on them. Think about it, your life. Let's think about my life. Are we in a bubble? Do we keep ourselves se, so separate that we don't get any on us? Don't prefer that company. Do we keep aloof and then criticize when we see them getting their just due?

The Pharisees, the scribes, they were breathing in and breathing out that kind of an attitude several times a day, reciting them even in their prayers. So, by making this self-righteous, critical spirit sentiment a matter of prayer, they're practicing self-deception. They fool themselves into thinking that God accepts them, that God shares the same sentiment because it's in prayer. They think they're conversing with God and that their attitude in prayer is God's attitude. They forget

that Isaiah 55, as we just read, says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts."

So, Jesus cuts through this sanctimonious attitude, the Pharisees, and he delivers parables about common people doing common things; common people like a shepherd or a woman in a house doing something common, facing a common loss. He doesn't, he doesn't elevate it to theological issues here. He talks about what's normal among people. These proud-hearted religious men, they're rebuked by the common manner of a shepherd who seeks his lost sheep, rebuked by the woman who searches for her lost coin because, in finding what they lost, they rejoiced. They can't help it. What they lost matters to them.

More to the point, they're rebuked by the friends and the neighbors who come forth to rejoice with them when that lost thing is found. The friends and the neighbors don't hold themselves aloof. They don't criticize and say, woman, can't keep track of your coin? Shepherd, what kind of shepherd are you, losing the, losing the sheep? "When" the shepherd. "comes home," verse 6, "calls together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I've found my sheep that was

lost.'" And what is the appropriate response of true friends?
How do they demonstrate their friendship?

When the woman cries out in joy, having finally found her lost coin after a, a diligent, exhausting search, choking on all the dust she swept up to try to get it out of the way and see if she can spot that coin, her anxious heart is lifted to a state of joy in recovering her valuable. I mean, that is one tenth of her savings! "She calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I found the coin that I had lost.'" What is the fitting response of a true neighbor? A true friend? And what does a false neighbor and a false friend do?

Port that appropriate fitting response in these common things, port that over to the spiritual realm, now, and think about the grave situation of a sinner, if we coined, you know, use the term of Jonathan Edwards of a "sinner in the hands of an angry God." Think about the eternal consequences before this lost sinner. Issues of heaven and hell are at stake. Eternal life and eternal death. So, when God saves a lost sinner from this certain, eternal death, listen, it is appropriate, it is

fitting, let me just put it this way, it is righteous to rejoice. It is righteous to give thanks.

It is a righteous affection to celebrate with the lost being found and the self-righteous cannot see this. They're so filled with themselves, so self-satisfied, they flatter themselves in their own opinions, their own judgments, the thoughts of their own heads. They are blind to what is true righteousness. They have no share in salvation, no part in the inheritance of the just. They don't know what it is to be justified by faith, forgiven of all their sins because of the free grace of God. They don't know that. They have no gratitude because they don't sense a need for it. They've not received a pardon for their own sins. They think they're fine. They pat themselves on the back for doing good works that God accepts.

The righteous, though, they can be counted on to rejoice because they know, first of all, number one, it is right to rejoice in finding the lost because they know what it is to be lost and found personally. The righteous know what it is to be lost and found personally, and for them, being found is better than being lost. They can understand this. They were once lost.

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Now they're found. They were once blind, and now they see. There was a time that God's Word made no sense to them, but now its riches keep on pouring out for them with every reading, with every hearing. They love to study and read the scripture.

They too, they remember, they were lost sheep. They wandered in that vast wilderness of sin and transgression. They were prey to the predator. They were foolish and stupid. They were distracted and lost, and frightened of the dangers, powerless to fend off dangers of predators and ditches, and briar patches, and all the rest. But the searching Christ came, and he found them, and in love he snatched them out from the jaws of death.

They, too, they remember, they were lost coins. Dumb, inanimate objects, having no feeling, ignorant to the core, they were falling into deep cracks, covered with filth, mud, mire, lying there, unable to make a sound. They're dirty, they're hidden from view, but they were never forgotten by the searching Christ. They're never out of the sight of the omniscient searching Spirit of God, and Christ searched diligently and found them, and, in love, he reclaimed them as his own.

They know what it is to be lost. With David, they exclaim, Oh, ha! "How blessed," Psalm 32, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity." And, we can add, how blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness instead. Having been found, forgiven, justified by God, they are covered now in the righteousness of Christ. They know, in the core of their being, they know it is right to rejoice in the salvation of the lost.

For the righteous, number two, they can be counted on to rejoice because they know, secondly, it is right to rejoice with those you call friends. It is right to rejoice with those that you call friends. That is true friendship. Romans 12:15, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

Some of you have experienced great cause for weeping in your life. And it is the mark of true friendship, when that friend comes near you and weeps, when that friend shares your burden in prayer and lifts you up before the throne of God and

visits you, and maybe sends you a card, or an email, or a text, or however that comes to you. But it's expression of care and concern. They weep with those who weep.

In the same sense, on the other end of the emotional spectrum, they rejoice with those who rejoice. Your joy is their joy. They rejoice. Like, it's like a parent watching their child grow up and, and do good things, whether it's on the playfield or in school or accomplishments, it doesn't matter how small or how big. They love to see the child or grandchild succeed and do well, and you rejoice.

Back to verse 6, "When he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I found my sheep that was lost.'" Again, in verse 9, "When she found it, she calls together her friends and her neighbors, 'Rejoice with me, for I found the coin that I had lost.'"

Listen, if you're a friend of the shepherd, if you are a neighbor to the woman, then you will be like the angels of heaven surrounding the throne of God, sharing in the joy, eager

to obey this polite command, "Rejoice with me." Because in your heart of hearts you know this is, this is right. This is appropriate, this is fitting and because this is a friend. This is a friend.

In fact, this is the verb that is used at the very end of the chapter, fitting. Last verse, Luke 15:32. The father is there with the older son. He's trying to lovingly, trying to coax this proud older brother to come back on inside and rejoice with them. He tells him in verse 31, "Son, you're always with me." I mean, that's the true joy of, of sonship, right, to be with the father? He says, "Son, you're always with me, and all that is mine is yours." Then this, "It was fitting." That's the verb *de*, meaning it is necessary or it is morally right. "It was fitting," necessary, morally righteous, "to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and he's alive; he was lost, and he's now found."

When the father is rejoicing in this way over his younger son, for the older son to stay outside and sulk is wickedness to the core. It doesn't show any affection, not just for the younger brother, it shows no affection for the father himself.

Listen, if it is morally right to rejoice, then it is morally wrong not to rejoice.

Those who are indifferent now in the salvation of the lost, those who remain cool and stand aloof and stay apart, those who have a critical, judgmental spirit, the spirit of the Pharisees, grumbling and complaining, refusing to rejoice over the salvation of lost sinners, or refusing to come near enough to even see it for themselves because they're so far afield, do they really think that God approves of them? Does God really approve of that kind of attitude? Do, do they really think that they share the heart of the father?

When sinners around us are being saved, you know, ask yourself, and I think we all have to ask ourselves and be really honest with what's going on in our hearts, do we find ourselves cold? People with new found salvation; do we choose to grumble and complain instead, caught up with negativity, unwilling or unable to rejoice, so preoccupied with our own judgments and thoughts, and...? We consider it instead a matter of righteousness? Do we consider it, I don't care how I feel, I don't care what's been going on in my life. Man, there's a

salvation of a lost sinner! I must rejoice, I must come forward, I must congratulate, celebrate. I must exult in God, the Savior, who plucked this fire brand out of the fire!

Consider again those words of the loving father, appealing to his hard-hearted son, "Son, you are always with me." Son. I love that language, calling that old brother who pictures the Pharisees, calling him son. "Son, you're always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad. Listen to the appeal, "for this brother of yours is dead and now he's alive; he was lost, he's found." Come on, back in the house. Come on, rejoice with me, rejoice with us.

If you're inclined to respond with righteous affections, if this appeal to you is landing and hitting its mark, then you know what? You're going to find room in your heart for the next affection as well. The next affection, number two, you will have, number two, Gospel affections. If you're compelled internally by righteousness of the issue, well then, it's an easy step to see the Gospel issue and the Gospel affection that comes out as well.

Again, notice the contrast in verses 1 and 2. "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him."

That's the good news. That's a picture of the salvation of the lost, the lost sheep being found, lost coins being recovered and then, verse 2, "The Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" You don't find that in the parables. You find friends and neighbors coming and rejoicing. Maybe there's an open question about any of those friends and neighbors of the shepherd or of the woman. Maybe there's an open question about, do they all come? They ought to.

Here are the Pharisees. They're the odd men out here. They may be in the religious majority. They may be, have the most influence over the land of Israel. They may get their way in the crucifixion of the Savior. But here, they're the odd ones out. They don't fit into either parable. They don't fit into the summary of the parables, verse 7, verse 10, and the attitude of Heaven. They're outsiders, they don't belong.

To the religiously proud, in the eyes of the self-righteous, ruined sinners, in Jesus' day, ruined sinners deserved to suffer in the misery that they had created for themselves. You made your bed, lie down in it. You made the bed, you lie in it. You stay there. Soak in it for awhile. That was the popular view. It's reinforced by the teaching of the Pharisees and rabbinic Judaism that had no compassion and very little kindness toward the lost. Oh, they may flip a coin every now and again as an alm for the poor, alm for the crippled, alm for the lame, and the blind, and those in a condition like that. But that coin that they flip isn't out of compassion. It's out of self-righteousness, saying, see, look at my good works. In fact, they blew a trumpet going into the temple as they cast coins into the temple coffers.

Yeah, it's true that sin makes people stupid. Sin makes people stupid. I tell my kids that. Hey, sin makes you stupid, that's why that happened. There are consequences, too, for years and years and decades and decades of committing sin. We see that all around us. The cost of sin is great, isn't it? Some of you, some of us have experienced that. Consequences of sins we commit. They can pile up so high. The weight of guilt can be so

crushing, always bearing down on us, never letting the sinner escape under its weight. The shame that we feel and react to and live with.

And all that the Pharisees and the scribes did was to add more weight and more burden onto this already crushing burden. They didn't lift a burden at all, not even one, with one of their little fingers. They didn't expend any energy to lift burdens, they added burdens. So, the Pharisees amplified the message of guilt. They offered no hope to hopeless sinners, and that is, by the way, every other religion in the world besides biblical Christianity, does the same thing to sinners.

This woke-ism that's going on in our country right now and critical theory and all the rest, and that's just another false religion. It's just another false religion adding crippling weight to an already burdened sinner. The works righteousness theology that they espoused enslaved sinners to a non-gospel, a fake good news of this perpetual bondage, self-salvation by pursuing good works, acts of penance that would, would never set them free from bondage to the law, could never grant them forgiveness for their sins, could never free them from the

penalty and the power of sin. So, no amount of effort, money, works, accomplishments, service, none of that can do what only God can do.

God counts all that man-made righteousness as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:6. He calls it rubbish. It's an offence to God's holiness even to imagine that you can buy God off with your works, with your merit. You haven't considered carefully enough that his holiness is impeccable. His, he is too pure to look upon sin. And your works don't do anything to erase your sins. In fact, they just compile your sins because of the offense of trying to buy him off with your sins. It's another sin. Your work becomes another sin; your righteousness becomes another form of sin.

He's too pure to look upon sin. His righteousness is too perfect. His justice is too exacting, and so no one, by quote, unquote, "getting his act together," no one by reforming his life, no one by pulling himself up, up by his own bootstraps, is able to save himself, because no one can erase his own sins. That's what we read in Isaiah 1, "Your sins are like scarlet. They're like crimson." You are not getting that out.

So, what makes the Gospel the Gospel? This is what makes the Gospel such good news. These tax collectors and sinners, they are our hope. You take the very dregs of Jewish society and if they can be saved and draw near and be welcomed by Jesus Christ and Jesus eats with them and fellowships with them, he receives them, they're reconciled to God through him; if they can come, we can come. You get the picture? Such good news.

These tax collectors, sinners, they were considered truly the scum of the earth and Jesus does not receive them or welcome them or eat with them because they made themselves acceptable. That's the way of the Pharisees and the scribes, making themselves acceptable and thinking they have a right to be at the table with Jesus. Salvation does not come through external law keeping, and frankly, I think that is what really irritated these self-righteous religious leaders the most. The grace of God really nullified their entire life of good works that they try to make themselves acceptable to God with. What made sense to them in their flesh is that salvation is earned. It's merited through effort.

And the grace of God says, No. God justifies the ungodly by his grace, and by his grace alone. It's through a faith that anyone can exercise. Yes, even tax collectors. Yes, even sinners. Even the very worst of sinners, like the woman at the end of Chapter 7 in Luke's gospel, anointing his feet with her tears and wiping them, drying them with her hair. She is so joyful over receiving his salvation. Anyone can come because anyone can exercise faith in him.

God justifies the ungodly not by their merit, by Christ's merit. He justifies the ungodly not by overlooking their sins, but by dealing with their sins in punishing his son. The grace of God completely subverted these pharisaic expectations, and it offended them. They hated this, because if they were to embrace salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, you know what that means for their whole life? Worthless. They've got to admit that their entire life of works, their entire life of effort means nothing before God.

Grace of God is what levels the playing field. All are sinners. All ground is level before the cross. So that counts for the opportunist tax collectors to these scrupulous scribes.

That counts for the morally fastidious Pharisees all the way to the irreligious and unclean sinners and everybody in between, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." So there, if there is salvation to be had, and there is, praise God, it can only come by the grace of God. It's only according to his mercy. By his grace alone. It comes through faith in Jesus Christ, and faith in him alone.

Those with Gospel affections rejoice in that truth. They rejoice in that Gospel; their hearts are filled with gratitude for the grace and the goodness of God in the Gospel. And that's why Jesus rejoices in seeking and saving the lost, because he wants to rescue them. He wants to receive them to himself. These are gifts of God to him. The father loves to send him, execute salvation, the plan of redemption through Christ. And he loves and rejoices to go find those sinners, receive them to himself, and bring them to the father.

So, first reason we can have Gospel affections is because the Gospel is about reversing an expected outcome. It's about reversing an expected outcome. There's a verb there about the lost. They were lost. The verb *apollymi*, and it can be

translated in two different ways. Here, it's translated appropriately for the context, correctly as lost, but in another context, *apollymi*, you can hear the word, that word, that verb in the word Apollyon, which refers to the destroyer. *Apollymi* can be translated in other contexts as destroyed or ruined.

That is the case with any sheep that remains lost. It ends up dead. That's the case with any coins that remain lost. The end result is they become useless chips of metal, ineffective, forgotten, lost, ruined. So, Jesus rescues lost sheep from certain death and he finds coins that are valuable to him and he makes them useful, productive for future use. So, the Gospel is about reversing an expected outcome. It reverses that outcome and actually does the opposite. It's such a joy, it's what produces within us Gospel affections.

Number two, secondly, Jesus rejoices in this Gospel because it's about rescuing the vulnerable and the helpless. It's about rescuing the vulnerable and the helpless. The sheep is absolutely helpless apart from a loving shepherd who comes to find him. The coin is inanimate and so it has no life in itself. No ability in itself, it can't recognize its condition, it can't

make itself useful. The lost coin is completely dependent on a searching owner who doesn't forget about it and goes and finds it, re-enters it into the economy, into circulation so it becomes useful again.

Frederic Godet put it this way, he said God's love for sinners is revealed in Jesus Christ, evident first, quote, "from the compassion with which their misery inspires Christ, and second, from the value which he attaches to their persons." End quote. They were wandering sheep. They were lost coins, vulnerable, helpless, experiencing the consequences of their sins. But, stirred with compassion, Jesus was stirred with compassion, he's mindful of their value, and he seeks his own, those whom the Father has given him.

"When he comes home," verse 6, "he calls together his friends and his neighbors, and he says to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'" Like the woman searching for her coin, verse 9, "...when she's found it, she calls together friends and neighbors, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I'd lost.'" So, rejoicing here is a Gospel affection. It's evidence of a Gospel affection, the good

news of rescuing the vulnerable and the helpless. Third thing we see here is the Gospel is about receiving the repentant, receiving the repentant, and so it produces great affections of joy and exuberation, the rejoicing that ensues when sinners do actually repent, when they reverse course. They're heading for destruction, and they repent and turn and head for life.

Jesus is not pictured in either of the parables, notice, he hasn't pictured a repentant sheep, has he? That would seem ludicrous on its face, right? For a sheep to bleat out, I repent, and to return home. Or a coin. There's no repentant coin here. It's sits there until it's picked up. But we do see, in the fuller story of the prodigal son, a repentant younger son, don't we? So, these two parables, what are they focusing on? Even though they mention repentance in the summary, verse 7, verse 10, the focus in the parables here is on God's initiative to sh, to save. It's on God's initiative so that we know that the repentance and the faith that we see in the third story are the result of a seeking Savior and not the cause of a seeking Savior. You get what I'm saying?

Repentance and faith, they are the result of God's initiative of grace, not the cause of God's initiative and grace. God's sovereign grace, his initiative in seeking and saving the lost sinners, that is the crucial point in these two parables. That's what's put on display. That's what receives central attention. It's a vital point to make before we get into the parable of the prodigal son, because if we only had the story, the prodigal son, we'd be missing this fundamental piece of the picture, that salvation is God's initiative. It's because of God's choice. It's because of God's love. It's because of God seeking and saving, his delight in saving lost sinners.

When we get to the end of each parable, though, we actually see, as Jesus summarizes the point of each parable, we actually do see, hey, wait a minute, that sheep did repent, and that coin, it did repent. Verse 7, "Just so," as in, just as a shepherd rejoices in finding lost sheep, "Just so, I tell you, there's more joy in heaven over one sinner who," does what? "...repents than over ninety-nine righteous person who need no repentance." Skip ahead to verse 10. "Just so, I tell you, there's joy before the angels of God over one sinner who," does what? "...repents." So, in the parable of the lost sheep, in the

parable of the lost coin, there's repentance embedded there, even if we don't see that until the very end in the summary.

God receives the repentant sinner because of what Jesus has accomplished for them. They repent and they have something to point to in hope of salvation because Jesus has accomplished everything. And though it cost him dearly, Jesus' affections are perfectly aligned with the divine will and the divine purpose. Hebrews 12:2 says, it was "for the joy that was set before him that he endured the cross, despising the shame..." He paid the price of his own blood. He poured out his blood for the salvation of sinners. He endured the wrath of God that was executed upon him for them. A great substitute, this great Shepherd of souls, the diligent seeker of the lost valuables, he rejoices, even though it cost him everything.

Charles Spurgeon said it this way, he said, quote, "A great sorrow was on Christ when our load was laid on him. But a greater joy flashed into his mind when he thought that we were thus recovered from our lost estate. He said to himself, 'I have taken them up on my shoulders. None can hurt them now, neither can they wander to destruction. I am bearing their sin, and they

shall never come into condemnation. Penalty of their guilt has been laid on me, that it may never be laid on them. I am the effectual and efficient substitute for them. I am bearing that they may never bear my father's righteous anger.'" He continues, "His love to them made it a joy to feel every lash of the scourge of justice. His love to them made it a delight that the nails should pierce his hands and feet and that his heart should be broken in the absence of his Father, God." End quote.

That's the joy set before him. It's not a joy that ignores the pain, that ignores the suffering, that ignores the persecution, that ignores the crucifixion. It's not joy that sets aside and ignores the agony of bearing the father's wrath over sin. But it's a joy through that path. It is a joy that understands the perfect wisdom of God in salvation and delights to "do your will, Oh God."

Jesus Christ has Gospel affections. He rejoices to reverse the expected outcome. Those condemned to die are now alive forevermore. He rejoices in that. He rejoices to rescue the vulnerable and the helpless, snatching the prey from the jaws of death, pulling the lost from eternal judgment. He loves that. He



rejoices to receive the repentant sinner and deliver that one to the father as his gift to the father.

Will we as a flock of lost sheep, now all of us found, now all of us gathered together as lost coins, now safe in the kingdom's bank, will we grumble? Is there any place among us for a critical spirit, complaining attitude? A voice of self-centeredness and self-absorbed pity? Certainly not. Our joy and our gratitude, it will come forth, it must come forth from a deep well of Gospel affections. It must burst forth from us in exultant praise for God's great salvation.

That's Gospel affections. A heart of righteous affections, and Gospel affections cultivates, thirdly, a heart, number three, of humble affections. Righteous affections, Gospel affections, cultivates a heart of humble affections. Again, this is in contrast completely to the scribes and the Pharisees. It's in contrast to all the religious leadership. It's in contrast to the great and the powerful, the mighty, the strong, and their own cause. It's a heart of humility and meekness.

Again, the close of the first parable, verse 7, "Just so, I tell you," as he sums up the parable and gives the, gives the meaning and gives the, the point he wants to come across, "Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Now, who are these ninety-nine righteous persons who supposedly, or allegedly, need no repentance? Who are they?

One way to interpret this is to see the ninety-nine as the true sheep who are loved by the shepherd. And they're just set aside for a time while the shepherd goes after the lost sheep. Those who see verse 7 that way, say it's the same thing that happens in a family, right? Several children are there, but one is lost and all attention turns to the lost child in that moment. When finding her, she's lavished with love and affection and it's not that the other children are not loved. It's not that they're set aside, scorned, it's just that the preoccupation, rightly, appropriately, is focused for that one, for that lost child in that period of time.

It's a possible meaning, and there are several reasons I don't follow that interpretation of the verse, it's just,

really, contextual. First thing, we see that Jesus he's, he's left the metaphor of the parable behind. And now he's talking about heavenly realities. So, we're not talking about the metaphor of shepherd with his flock of sheep, which, if that's all, if we're going to take the metaphor imagery, and, and shove it into the interpretation in verse 7, we'd say, well, they're all sheep. It's not that he's, he's got a ninety-nine goats that he leaves in the pen, and he goes after the sheep. They're all sheep. But he's leaving the, the metaphor behind. Okay? So, he's transferring over to what we're supposed to understand and take from it.

Secondly, remember that the parable and its meaning is addressed, in particular to the scribes and the Pharisees. It's addressed to the self-righteous. He's not trying to assure them, here, that there are such people such as themselves who need no repentance. He's not trying to steel them in their self-righteousness. He's certainly not affirming a, a ninety-nine-to-one ratio of those who need no repentance versus those who do.

He's aiming the parable at grumblers. He's aiming the parable at the self-righteous, and he's trying to expose how

utterly unfitting their spirit is in light of this beautiful scene of salvation they're beholding before them. These lost people, these tax collectors and sinners are being found and they're repenting and coming to saving faith. Grumbling is not fitting, but rather rejoicing. So, in no way is Jesus affirming them as sheep. He's in no way assuring them that they are indeed righteous people who have no need to repent. He's actually exposing the very real probability they might not be sheep at all, and they should be examining themselves.

During the whole chapter, really, Jesus is mercifully speaking to the Pharisees. Notice he's not harsh in the way he speaks to them. He's seeking, if possible, if God would provide it, he's seeking some fruit among the Pharisees and the scribes. He's telling these parables to provoke self-examination among those who may have, by God's grace, may have ears to hear.

Does something similar in Luke 18 with the rich young ruler, doesn't he? I mean look at that in Luke 18:20. Jesus said to the rich young ruler there, in Luke 18:20, he says, "You know the commandments: You know them. Do not commit adultery, Do not commit murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor

your father and mother." It's interesting in that list what he leaves out. He leaves out covetousness, doesn't he? He leaves out the first table of the Ten Commandments all about a priority for loving God. So, he says, second half of the Ten Commandments, he gives him those.

And then the, what does the rich young ruler say in verse 21? "All of these I have kept from my youth." What a good kid! What a lucky mom, you know? But the fact that Jesus does not challenge this bold claim, it doesn't imply that Jesus believes him. He doesn't, he doesn't accept his word on his, on its face. He just sidesteps that little affirmation that he made. Instead, he exposes the man's sin by another approach, verse 22. "When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and then come, follow me.'" Well, there he got him. There he exposed the heart. "When he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich."

Jesus took a less direct route there, didn't he? He chose not to deal with it directly, head on. He didn't confront or contradict the young man's self-righteousness directly. Instead,

he wisely chose another route. He chose to expose the blinding sin of this lifelong idolatry, this enslaving covetousness that choked out any affection for Christ, saying, part ways with anything that has your heart. Sell all that you have. Deal with your stingy heart by being generous. See if you can give it away. And then come follow me, make me your treasure. Make me your one reward, and you will have treasure in heaven.

He couldn't do it. Couldn't do it. Walked away from Jesus, and as he walked away from Jesus that day, he walked right off the pages of scripture and he sank into oblivion with all of his stuff. That in mind, go back to Luke 15:7. Consider that the ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance, these are those who think they have no need for repentance. These are those who think that they are righteous before God. They think that their merit accrues to their benefit before a holy God.

Jesus said something similar to the same, not the same exact people, but the same group of people, Pharisees and scribes, back in Luke 5:31. Remember there, the, in the calling of Levi, Matthew, called him into discipleship. In response, Levi, Matthew, threw him a banquet, invited all of his worldly

friends. He wanted all of them to hear this good news, this Gospel, and so he invited them. Jesus, tell them what you told me. Jesus, tell them, tell them about righteousness before God. How you have it, and I don't, and I can find it in you, and I can be accepted before God. I can be justified, me the ungodly, justified before a holy God. Tell them that message, Jesus.

So, there he is, eating, drinking with tax collectors and sinners, and he's talking to them about the Gospel and the Pharisees come up and they criticize. They criticize, what are you doing? It's same, it's the same charge. Receiving them, welcome them, and eating with them, what are you doing? Eating and drinking with those? Remember how he responded? "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." What's he saying to the Pharisees and the scribes, there? Is he saying, you're well, you don't need a, you don't need a doctor? You're righteous. Criticism justified. You're righteous. I haven't come for you. So, just, just understand I'm doing a different work here. You do your work for God, and I'll do mine. That's not what he's saying.

Back to verse 7. The best way to see verse 7 is not as making a comparative statement, that there is more joy over one penitent sinner and less joy over ninety-nine righteous people. That's not the idea at all. It's not a comparative. Instead, he's saying there is joy in the first case, no joy in the second case. The grammar that Jesus uses here makes that point. It strengthens the disjunctive force of the conjunction, there. So, it literally reads, "I tell you in the same way, joy in heaven there will be over one sinner who repents, rather than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Joy in the first case, no joy in the second case.

It's reinforced actually by the parallel in verse 10, where there is no comparative idea at all. "Just so I tell you, there's joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Doesn't even mention the nine, like the nine coins, the nine who need no repentance. Doesn't even mention that. That's it. Period. What fills heaven with joy is one single repentant sinner, not a multitude of self-righteous religious people. Jesus rejoices in the humble few, in that remnant who know that they need repentance. They know that they have nothing

to be proud of in their life. They have nothing that accrues to their benefit, nothing on their resume.

There's no joy in those who are proud in heaven. There's no joy who those, over those who refuse to admit their need. Hendrickson says this, "Undoubtedly, in mentioning the ninety-nine, Jesus is thinking of the Pharisees, scribes, and their followers. His explanation does justice to the introduction of the parable, verses 1 and 2. The ninety-nine sheep represent the grumblers. They were the ones who were erecting the palace of their hope and security on the frail foundation of their own vaunted righteousness." End quote.

The shepherd/sheep metaphor should call to mind several significant Old Testament texts, with which the Pharisees, the scribes, are very familiar. In fact, you can turn back to Isaiah 53, Isaiah 53, and see one such text. This, when Jesus mentions the shepherd and the sheep, a, there're obviously a number of texts in the Old Testament they could go to, but this one should stand out. Most notable is this text, Isaiah 53, that should prompt within them a deep sense of humility among those who have penitent hearts. Isaiah 53 is a retrospective text. It's written

from the perspective of a repentant Israel looking back and speaking to an unrepentant Israel.

Look at Isaiah 53:1, "Who has believed what he's heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look upon him, no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely, he's borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him, stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed." And then this: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

And, down at verse 10, "Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; and when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong

his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he's poured out his soul to death, and he was numbered with the transgressors; and yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."

What is the appropriate response to that chapter? It's not just a humble response here, not just a Gospel response. What is the fitting, appropriate, righteous response to the doctrine that's expounded there, the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement, to the shepherd who dies in place of his straying and sinful sheep? Grumbling? No. Is criticism appropriate here? No. Gratitude is the only response with a humble heart, the Gospel heart, the righteous heart, that's, one that's been justified, one that's been declared righteous by God.

Gratitude and joy is the only pre, fitting response. "For you were," Peter says, "you were straying like sheep," 1 Peter

2:25, the profane and the righteous alike were straying like sheep. Those who seem, they're, they're sinning respectable sins, not gutter sins. All those and all the gutter dwellers as well, all of them, straying like sheep. "But now you've returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls." Praise God, and Amen.

Go back to Luke 15. Now if, if yours is a heart of righteous affections, if you have Gospel affections, if you have humble affections, you're not proud, but you're humble, meek, you're going to find yourself at home in heaven. You're going to find yourself at home in the company of the angels. You're going to be there among friends and neighbors who share the same affection that you have for that one neighbor, God, and his Christ, who saves sinners. You're going to find a home there.

Number four, you're going to have theological affections. Theological affections. What I mean by theological affections is I'm talking about theologically attuned affections, theologically informed affections. They are, your affections, your, your reaction to all of this, righteous, Gospel, humility, all of this is going to be informed by the theology that drives

it. It's these affections that are informed by who God is and what God does, who he really is in his essence, and what he does accomplish in his redemption.

This is about affections that respond in sympathy to God. This is about the creature who worships God, his Creator. The redeemed worshipping God, his Redeemer, the sinner worshipping God, his Savior. There's a theological reason that we respond in affection for the salvation of the lost. It's what Joaquin Jeremiah describes as, quote, "the soteriological joy of God." Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation. *Soterias* just means salvation. *Logos*, the study of. So, soteriological joy of God. The study of salvation. Study of seeing his joy in saving sinners. It's a theme that, well, as we see in the text has significant emphasis. It's repeated five times.

Number one, verse 5, the shepherd finds his lost sheep and he, himself, personally, privately rejoices. He returns home in verse 6, calls his friends and neighbors together to what? Rejoice with him. Third, you can see in verse 9 the woman does the same thing. She calls her friends together to rejoice over the coin that she lost and then found. And then the parables

portray the joy of heaven. Two more references to joy, verse 7, so this is number four, fourth expression here, of joy: joy in heaven over one sinner repents, and then verse 10, number five, joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

And we want to be theologically accurate, here. We need to be careful about how we speak about God. God does not respond to the salvation of one repentant sinner by rejoicing. Catch the language, there? He doesn't respond to it. He doesn't respond with any kind of emotion or affection because God is God, he is simple essence. And in his simple, eternal, perfect essence, he is immutable and impassable, that is to say, he does not change, and he is unaffected. Nothing moves upon him or moves him. He is not affected. He's not moved upon by some outside force. He's not even moved by an internal sense. For God to be moved would mean that he has moved, of necessity, from one state of being to another state of being. That would constitute a change in God, not eternal perfection, but some element of change. He had to change from a less joyful God to a more joyful God. That's impossible for God because he is eternally immutable, impassible; he doesn't change at all.

The right way to think about divine joy is this: God dwells perfectly, unchangeably in the bliss of eternal blessedness. He is perfect and unchanging in divine delight. Saying he's not affected, it doesn't mean he, he doesn't care. It's just that his care couldn't get any better. It's perfect care, it's eternal care and it doesn't waver. It doesn't change. It's not to say he doesn't love or have compassion, it's just that his love and his compassion are perfect to the extreme, perfect to the infinite degree, because he is an infinite, unchanging, eternal God. It does not waver, it does not change. That is good news for us. Several texts to point out on this.

God is the all-powerful creator, Romans 1:25, who is "blessed forever, Amen." To say "blessed forever, Amen," that's not just a throwaway benediction. He's actually, Paul's actually saying something about God there, that he is the blessed God. God is the absolute sovereign, "God over all, blessed forever. Amen," Romans 9:5. In 1 Timothy 6:15-16, it's even more explicit here, "God is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen." That is why he is the

blessed God, having blessedness in himself, full of divine joy, perfect and unchanging, because of who he is, is blessed forever. He's the blessed God because of who he is. He's the blessed God because of what he does. He executes sovereignty in redeeming his people.

So, we praise God that he is not affected. We praise God that he does not have changing passions that heat up and cool down like ours do. We praise God that he's not a man, or even an elevated man. Praise God that he's not some kind of mythical Grecian deity, with wavering affections, changing and waxing hot and then cooling off. Rather than being moved by unstable passions, rather than God experiencing affectation or changing affections, God's love is eternal, God's love is unchanging, it never waxes and wanes, it stays red hot. His delight is eternal. His delight is unchanging. It's always constant, it's eternally perfect.

If his delight and affection and love are perfect, would we prefer that they fluctuate so we can make him more relatable to us? Not at all. God rejoices in the salvation of sinners perfectly, in an unchanging way. He delights because he's the

one that came up with the whole plan to begin with. He rejoices over one sinner who repents because that repentance leading to salvation is his doing from start to finish. He's the one who initiated it. He's the one who executed it. He's the one who carries it on to completion. So, God delights in accomplishing and applying Christ's redemption to sinners.

It is in response then, to God's fixed, eternal, unchanging love, it is in response to God's fixed, eternal, unchanging delight in saving sinners, whenever that happens for us in time and space, to witness the evidence of his salvation in the repentance of sinners, well, even Heaven itself erupts in joy. All the creatures surrounding God that he created to respond to him in affection, they erupt in joy. They are immutable, changeable. They go from one state to another, and they are affected. They are changed. They do go from less joy to more joy in response to God. Mutable creatures around his throne. They are affected in rapturous joy. They respond with a resounding chorus of exultant praise. How could they keep silent? If they keep silent, the very rocks will cry out.

So, as Jesus, here, gives us a peek into Heaven itself, gives us a special view, and we see the creatures of Heaven responding to the sovereign grace of God, as the repentance of this one sinner becomes known to them and the repentance of that one sinner becomes known to them, the angels of God are affected, and they respond in praise. The saints of old are affected, responding in praise. The spirits of just men made perfect, affected, and responding and praise. The center of attention in this scene, the worship leader of all of Heaven: the risen Christ Jesus himself.

Isaiah 53:11, the father says, "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied..." And then this, in verse 12, I, "Therefore God says, I will divide him a portion with the many, he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and he makes intercession for the transgressors." And when he makes intercession, and that sinner comes in repentance and faith, Christ rejoices, and he leads a chorus of celebration and, and singing, and joy in Heaven itself.

Writer to the Hebrews pictures him there in that scene, saying this, Hebrews 2:12, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the great congregation, I'll sing your praise." I'd love to see and hear Christ sing, wouldn't you? He will point to the portion that God has given him. He will point to the spoils of the battle that he fought and won. And Hebrews 2:13 says, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."

I guarantee this, there will be no grumbling in that place at that time. No response there, but pure, unmitigated, unrestrained joy. One commentator said it's, it's a mark of great joy that seeks sympathy, it's a mark of great joy that seeks sympathy when you have something so severe happen to you, and it's just so dire and so difficult and so treacherous and grave. And then you're brought out of that condition and rescued. You can't wait to tell somebody. You want to share it, which is fitting and appropriate. It's good news. It's a Gospel affection.

Can we expect friends and neighbors to reciprocate the joy of the shepherd? The joy of the woman? Of course we can. It's taken for granted. Those who have affection for the shepherd,

those who love and sympathize with the woman, their status as friends and neighbors is not simply a matter of familiarity or proximity, it's a matter of relationship. They're invested with this person and when they joy, rejoice, they rejoice. How different that is from the attitude of the Pharisees.

Alfred Edersheim, he quotes straight from the rabbinic text, he finds the same attitude there. The Pharisaic, rabbinic attitude says, "There is joy before God when those who provoke him perish from the world." That's hard. That's hard stuff. Those who provoke him, hmm, isn't that all of us? What are we to make of that attitude in light of texts like Ezekiel 18:23? "'Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked,' declares the Lord God, 'and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?'" Like, don't I take pleasure in repentance instead of death? Ezekiel 33:11, where God testifies about himself, he says, "Say to them," Ezekiel, tell em, "'As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?'"

In this political climate we're in, where the media and the politicians are trying to foster division, and foster anger and animus, and hatred among us, don't let that be your attitude. Don't get caught up in all the anger and hatred and vitriol of this world that we're living in. Rather, have the idea that God loves even those despicable people who are trying to go after our kids. God loves them. God wants to see them repent. That's the attitude. Do I take any pleasure in destroying America? No, but rather that America should repent and live. Same principle Jesus has unpacked for us here, verse 7, verse 10, that Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents. He passes over the self-righteous grumblers, but he rejoices in one sinner who repents.

Do you respond to the joy of God, that God who delights in saving sinners, who finds pleasure in the repentance of one sinner? Because that's happening in our midst, you know. There are people coming here who are repenting, who God is favoring with his grace. They have a litany of sins. They got skeletons in the closet, they got, they got stuff they don't want to talk about and God has been pleased to show them grace. Will you rejoice? Spurgeon said, "I feel a sudden flush and flood of delight when I meet a, with a poor creature who once lay at

Hell's dark door but is now brought to the gate of heaven." Do not you? I do, I know many of you do too, as well, we, we all love to see the salvation of the lost. We love to see God show himself strong in the rescue of the lost.

May we all share those same affections. May we all respond to the perfect love and delight of God in saving sinners, an eternal delight, an unchanging love. Let us rejoice to see that happening in our midst. Regularly, here, God is favoring us by showing the grace and kindness of the Savior, Jesus Christ, plucking out lost sinners and bringing them to himself.

Let's pray. Our Father, we do delight in what delights you. And we do admit, even now as we express that delight, as we're moved by what Jesus has taught us here, we do admit that sometimes our hearts are cold, indifferent, distracted. There are times, we must admit, that we are like these Pharisees, scribes. We can tend toward that self-righteous attitude, critical spirit, finding always the dark questions and pondering those instead of rejoicing and celebrating as we ought to, as we must.

And so, father, we just pray that our congregation, our church, would be characterized by this joy over the lost, over the salvation of the lost, that we would delight in divine love, a love that will seek and save those who are lost. We all count ourselves among those lost sheep and lost coins. We count ourselves among those tax collectors and sinners, or on the other hand, what even seems more despicable in scripture, we count ourselves even among the scribes and the Pharisees, looking down on others, having this self-righteous, proud attitude.

Oh father, please forgive us for those sins. Please rescue us and free our hearts to indulge in your love. We pray that you would do that much more as the days go forward and help us to be that conduit of salvation, bringing that Gospel message to this lost world around us. We long to see more saved to the praise of your glorious grace, that gratitude would increase, and your praise and glory would be renowned. We love you, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.