

This Man Receives Sinners
The Parable of the Lost Sheep
 Luke 15:1-7

What stands out to me from Luke 14 and Luke 15 is the great difference between Jesus and the religious leaders of His day in their respective attitudes and actions towards sinners. The religious leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, felt that those who had broken the religious and moral laws were beyond grace: they were to be *excommunicated and excluded*. Jesus communicates with and includes sinners. In fact, the religious leaders said of Jesus *"This man receives sinners and eats with them"* (Luke 15:2).

I. The people Jesus attracts are sinners (v. 1).

"Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him" (15:1).

- A. The tax collectors (publicans) represent people disloyal to you.
 1. Friends or family who've betrayed your trust. Tax collectors were Jews working for Romans.
 2. Friends or family who've hurt you deeply. Tax collectors notoriously stole money from people.
 3. Friends or family who've forgotten you. Tax collectors formed cliques of the fortunate.
- B. The sinners were those with a public reputation of failure.
 Notice that the definite article "the" is used to describe sinners who came near Jesus to listen. Normally, the definite article is used as an expression of identity. There are lawyers and there are "the" lawyers you want to hire. There are sinners, and there are "the sinners" you wish to avoid.

II. Sinners are attracted to Jesus because He seeks them out (v. 2)

In Mark 2 we find Jesus ate *"with many tax collectors."* Jesus is called *"the friend of tax collectors and sinners"* (Luke 7:34). *"The son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost"* (Luke 19:10).

The best fisherman are those who go where the fish are. The best evangelist is the one who goes where the sinners and the publicans are. In other words, you only are following Jesus when you move toward those who have harmed you, betrayed your trust, forgotten you, or are in public failure.

III. The parable of the lost sheep is addressed to the religious self-righteous (v. 3).

"And He spake this parable unto them, saying" (v. 3). The wise man knows to whom Jesus speaks.

- A. The religious self-righteous are easily offended by the actions of others... There is very little Introspection of one's heart, but a constant pointing the finger at others – "If you only..."
- B. The religious self-righteous avoid the sinners who aren't worthy of them... Meaning instead of drawing near and moving toward people who have failed, there is a rejection and rebuffing.
- C. The religious self-righteous will judge others as not being righteous for friendship with sinners. They said of Jesus, "'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Matthew 11:19). They cast out the sinner and castigate the one who seeks sinners.

IV. The parable of the lost sheep illustrates the joy in heaven over one lost soul being found (v. 4-7).

This parable illustrates how a professing Christian (sheep) sometimes wanders from the fold of God.

- A. **The parable is of a sheep, not a dog or a pig or a cow.** Unlike other animals, sheep often drift away without realizing it. It is a slow, often unintentional process, which ends in helplessness.
- B. **The Shepherds response should be our response.** He left the ones in the fold and went after the sheep that was lost. "Follow Me," Jesus says (Matthew 9:9). Let's imitate that practice.
- C. **Jesus lays the lost sheep on His shoulder and carries His sheep home.** This seems to indicate a great deal of patience, endurance, strength and love from the Shepherd toward His sheep.