

“Jesus Loves Sinners”
Luke 15: 1-2

Luke 15 starts as seemingly a way to introduce a new subject, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ²And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”

The Message says, “By this time a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, “He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends.”

The New Living Translation calls them “notorious sinners.”

Instead, this is not a new subject at all but a continuation of the entire purpose of the writing of the gospel of Luke. Jesus loves sinners. He loves the outcasts, the down-and-outs. He loves the rejects.

Take a quick tour of this gospel and let us see this powerful impact of Jesus receiving them. Most of what is listed here is found ONLY in Luke

1. The author himself was a Gentile.
2. The book was dedicated to Theophilus, a Gentile.
3. The story begins with Elizabeth, a barren woman and the wife of a priest. She must have been rejected by God and under His judgment because she was a barren woman.
4. Then we read more about Mary in Luke than any other and find her describing herself in 1:48 as a “lowly maidservant.”
5. Only in Luke do we see Shepherds, the social outcasts and forbidden to enter Temple worship, mentioned as hearing the good news of Jesus’ birth. No wise men in Luke’s gospel.
6. Only in Luke 2 do we see Jesus astounding the scholars and teachers at the age of 12.
7. Only in Luke do we see what type of people John drew to His teachings: Luke 3 calls them tax collectors (vs. 12) and soldiers (vs. 14).
8. Only in Luke do we see the text for Jesus’ first message preached – Luke 4: 18-19 revealing that he was coming for the poor, brokenhearted, captives, the blind, the oppressed and its time NOW for it to happen.
9. Only in Luke do we see Jesus’ raising the only son of a widow in Nain in Luke 7.
10. Only in Luke do we see the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her

tears and dried them with her hair described as a “sinner” (vs. 37) and pointed out by the Pharisees that she was a sinner (vs. 39). A woman who was a harlot in the presence of a man, let alone a prophet?

11. Only in Luke 8:2-3 do we see that many women provided for the needs of Jesus.
12. Only in Luke do we learn of the Good Samaritan (chapter 10). A good Samaritan – a contradiction of terms.
13. Only in Luke chapter 13 is there a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for 18 years healed on the Sabbath in the synagogue while he was teaching.
14. Only in Luke (chapter 14) is there a man with dropsy – swelling in his legs and arms – was healed on the Sabbath in the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees.
15. Luke 14 – a great supper is made but the invited guests don’t come, so the master gets angry ordering them to go and get the “poor, maimed, lame and the blind” (vs. 21). The religious elite are not coming to the wedding.
16. Luke 15 is about a shepherd, a woman, and a man whose son lowered himself to wanting to eat pig slop.
17. Only in Luke 16 do we see a man begging, filled with sores, eating crumbs pictured like a dog that dies and goes to Heaven and the rich man dies and goes to Hell.
18. Only in Luke 17: 16 do we see ten lepers healed with only one returning and it says “He was a Samaritan.”
19. Only in Luke 18 do we see the story of Sunday worship with a Pharisee and tax collector with the tax collector asking for mercy and being justified, not the Pharisee.
20. Only in Luke do we have the story (chapter 19) of Zacchaeus being a tax collector that Jesus goes home with and brings salvation.
21. Only in Luke (23: 39-43) do we learn of a repentant thief getting paradise with Jesus on his day of death with Jesus.

Jesus loves sinners. He is a friend of sinners.

So, going back to Luke 15, let me make three statements of how Jesus feels toward sinners:

1. You are of worth to him.

Shepherd is not permitted in Temple worship. Outcasts – outsiders. But shepherds go after one lost sheep leaving 99 who don’t think they need any repentance.

But only in the heart of a parent would you go seeking for one and not accept 99% as good enough. Because love only in a parent’s heart is never diminished when divided.

Love knows the worth of one.

2. You are of value to him.

This is a woman. Every Jewish man prayed every day thanking God that they were not “a Gentile, a slave or a woman.”

But she loses a coin, which was at least a day’s wages and might have been more. She sweeps the house diligently until she finds it.

You are of great value to God. He does not want to waste a day of your life or see you waste a day.

3. You are desired of Him.

The last two parables are all about the Father wanting a relationship with his sons. There are two sons here but the teaching is the same: I will go to no limits to have a relationship with my sons.

A. He will let sinful situations run their course until you come to yourself and come into a relationship with Him.

He took 1/3 of all his father’s wealth, converted it to cash and wasted it with reckless living, wild living. The elder son said it was with harlots. It got so bad that he desired to eat the pigs’ food. But he came to himself, a right understanding of himself, his ways and his father’s provisions. He prepares a speech and heads home.

The Father sees him coming and throwing away Oriental behavior, he runs to meet him. This is the only time in the Bible we see the Father running. The father is so eager to receive him that he won’t let him finish his speech. He:

- a. Gets a robe. Not the one he wore previously, but one reserved for honored guests.
- b. Gets a ring. Symbol of authority. All the father has is now available to the son.
- c. Gets sandals. Servants or slaves never wore sandals. But he’s not a servant, but fully accepted as a son.
- d. Gets a fattened calf for a feast. Meat was normally not eaten at regular meals, but this was a celebration.

B. He will confront sinful spirits in order for you to come to a relationship with Him.

The elder son is a totally different story, but has the same underlying theme: The father wants a relationship with him.

Here is the symbol of the religious elite. Why?

- a. He had a self-righteous spirit. He looked down at disgust at his younger brother for only he tells us that the younger brother spent his living with harlots (vs. 30).
- b. He was angry at the sight of joy and fun. Religious people cannot stand somebody experiencing joy in the presence of Jesus.
- c. He was work oriented. He recounts all that he has done for his father thinking that was what the father wanted.
- d. He was bitter and unforgiving. He would not come in and forgive his brother. The meanest people in the world are religious people who are bitter and unforgiving; yet keep right on doing their religious duties.

The sad story about the elder son was he had no relationship with his father to know how heart broken the father was over the other son nor what the father really wanted out of his elder son.

Unlike the younger son where the Father stayed on the porch until he saw his son returning, with his elder son he goes off the porch and confronts him. All religious spirits must be confronted.

In the confrontation is the appeal to the opponents of Jesus, the Pharisees and scribes – the religious elite – that there is still time to be apart of His kingdom but you must recognize you are a sinner and repent. The sad truth is that most religious people see no reason they need to repent and won't.

So what is the message for us today? Jesus loves sinners.

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Once President Abraham Lincoln was asked how he was going to treat the rebellious southerners when they had finally been defeated and had returned to the Union of the United States. The questioner expected that Lincoln would take a dire vengeance, but he answered, “I will treat them as if they had never been away.”

That's the same with God.