



KEN LEGG MINISTRIES

QUALIFIED FOR EVERY BLESSING BECAUSE
OF THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS

FINDERS KEEPERS

Jesus told many parables. The word 'parable' is made up of two words – para = alongside, and ballein = to cast or throw. A parable, then, is a story cast alongside a truth to illustrate it. It's always important to ask why Jesus told a parable before attempting to interpret it.

Probably the best known parable Jesus told is the one we refer to as 'the prodigal son'. He told this story in response to those who were shocked because He mixed, and even ate, with 'sinners'. He wanted people to know what God really thinks about those who are lost. In fact, He told three parables to illustrate this truth – the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.

The lost sheep and the lost coin

So why three parables? It could be argued that the 'blame' focus for getting lost was different in the first two parables. The sheep got lost because it was heedless and careless. It put its nose to the ground and ate grass until it looked up and realised it had strayed from the flock.

But we couldn't blame the coin for getting lost. It didn't sit on the table saying to itself, "As soon as the woman turns her back, I'm going to roll off this table and out the door!" No, it was the woman who lost the coin.

Some people get lost because they just wander away. But others are lost because they are hurt or abused by those who were supposed to be responsible for their spiritual care.

However the point that Jesus was making is not why people are lost, but the fact that they are lost.

It doesn't matter whose fault it is. Jesus wants us to know the agony of the 'loser'. In both parables, the 'loser' went looking for that which was lost. That's what God does. All you need to qualify for God's redeeming love is to be lost!

The lost son

But what about the lost son? He was a rebel; and you can't run after a rebel. You have to wait until he has come to the end of himself and is ready to come home.

That's what happened to the prodigal son. He blew his inheritance, backing slow horses and fast women. And then he came up with a self-redemption plan – he would serve his way back into his father's house!

When the father saw his son on the horizon he ran towards him. Bible scholars, familiar with the culture of the day, say that this would be a shameful thing for him to do. He would have had to pick up his long robe and tuck it in around his waist. This would expose his bare legs, which would have been culturally unacceptable, especially for someone his age.

Obviously, his love for his son far outweighed any concerns he might have had about his image in the community.



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FINDERS KEEPERS – P2

Why the father ran to his son

There was probably a reason why the father ran to his son, other than that he was so pleased to see him.

Whenever a Jewish son lost his inheritance to a Gentile and attempted to come back to his home, the local community would come out to meet him before he even made it into the village or town. They would have a large clay pot which would be smashed in his presence. This depicted how he had shattered the honour of his family, home and community by squandering his inheritance. This ceremony was called the 'kezazah'. The word kezazah means 'cutting off'.

The message of this ritual was very clear – “You are banished from this town. You are not welcome here!”

The father ran to his youngest son so that he could get to him before anyone else did. He cried out: “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him... and a ring for his finger, and shoes for his feet. And kill the fatted calf! My son who was lost has come home! There'll be no kezazah here. We're throwing a party!”

Like the father in this story, Jesus was prepared to go out on a limb publicly and be criticised for His unconditional love and radical grace towards the lost, no matter how badly they had mucked up.

“Please come home!”

A mother and daughter were finding it difficult to make ends meet. One morning the mother discovered that her daughter had left home to head for the bright lights of the city. The young woman was confident that her good looks were all she needed to make a living for herself.

After a while her mother could stand the pain no longer. She took what little money she had – a handful of coins – and went to a photo kiosk and had several passport-size photos taken of herself. She cut the photos into individual snaps and headed for the city. She visited every bar and seedy joint she could find and taped her photo in the lobby or some other prominent place, hoping her daughter would see it.

One day, her daughter staggered into the lobby of a motel where a 'client' had paid for a room for them the night before. She was depressed, lonely and laden with guilt. Then she noticed the little photo. “Is this... could it be... it is! It's my mother!” She took the photo from the notice board and turned it over. On the back of the photo were these words: “Whatever you've done and whatever you've become, it doesn't matter. Please come home. I love you. Mum.” And she did!

Prodigals are still coming home – and Jesus taught us how to welcome them!

Ken Legg