

“The Parable of the Running Father”

Seeking and Saving the Lost - Luke 15

Introduction:

_____ Context → The social, economic, political, and religious background of a text.
_____ Context → The relationship between words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in a text.

Key Point: _____ → allows us to enter the world of the speaker and understand the text in the same way the hearers would have.

Context (Luke 14 and 15):

The Setting → A dinner between the _____ and _____, with the _____ outside. Jesus as the teacher and the Pharisees and the Crowd forming **two distinct groups of hearers**.

The Charge → “This man _____ sinners and _____ with them”.

- ⇒ The implication is that Jesus is himself a sinner or at the very least he doesn't attain to the righteousness of the Pharisees as he doesn't even recognize that he is making himself unclean by association.
- ⇒ Pharisaic Mindset → “Let not a man associate with the wicked, not even to bring him the law” – *Mekhilta (Midrash) on Exodus*

The Response → Instead of a direct response to their grumbling, Jesus responds with a series of three parables that would challenge the _____ and _____ of all who heard.

Parables of Lost Sheep and Coins:

Luke 15:3-7 (*Good Shepherd / Lost Sheep*) → What _____ of you?

Luke 15:8-10 (*Diligent Woman / Lost Coin*) → What _____?

- ⇒ Both parables focus on _____ and _____ the lost and how heaven _____ over sinners who repent. Both parables present a main character looking for and finding something that was lost and both end with parties celebrating the recovery of that which was lost.

Parable of the Running Father:

Luke 15:11-13 → The Prodigal

- ⇒ The younger son does something unthinkable and asks his father to divide his inheritance **now before his father is even dead**. This would have been immediately noticed by the hearers as an extremely _____ and _____ request.
 - Historical Context → Rabbi 120 years before time of Jesus → “*To son or wife, to brother or friend, do not give power over yourself, as long as you live; and do not give your property to another. At the time when you end the days of your life, in the hours of death, distribute your inheritance*” - Ecclesiasticus 33:19-23
 - The audience would have expected the father to deny the son's request right then and there, and if he didn't then surely the older brother would step in to save face. So, it was doubly _____ to the audience that he apparently grants the request and, “**he divided his property between them v12b**”.
- ⇒ Even worse, not many days after receiving his inheritance, the younger son _____ it **while the father is living**, skips town, and moves to live among the _____ in “a far country”.
 - Historical Context → Jewish Mishna (Oral Law) → “*If one assign in writing his estate to his son to become his after his death... the son cannot sell it (the estate) because it is under the father's control*” (Baba Bathra viii.7)
 - Further Historical Background → Kezazah Ceremony → *By Jewish custom, at this point the son could have been to be disowned by the community. A ceremony called Kezazah (cutting off) would be performed if a Jewish son lost his inheritance to a Gentile. In this case, the son would not even be allowed to return or have anything to do with the community. He was well and truly dead to them.*

- The relationship is truly _____ at this point and the father would be considered well in his rights to completely disown this son severing him from both hearth and home. **The audience would have expected it.**

Luke 15:14-19 → The Prodigal Cont.

- ⇒ The younger son has now squandered all his property and has since hired **himself out to a foreigner** to be a field worker who feeds pigs (a pig farmer).
- ⇒ The son finally **“came to himself”** and took stock of his situation. He knew how he had left the relationship, but at least his father’s servants had plenty of food. He would return and seek to be a hired hand.

Luke 15:20-24 → The Running Father

- ⇒ “But while he was still **a long way off** his father **saw him** and **felt compassion** and **ran** and **embraced** him and **kissed** him. - v. 20.
- ⇒ Of all the surprises in this story the audience heard, this is perhaps the most _____. In eastern contexts, this parable is not called the parable of the prodigal. They call it the **parable of the running father** because of how out of character this is.
 - ⇒ In these times men especially, older men **did NOT run**. It was considered _____ as you had to hike up your robe and reveal your undergarments.
- ⇒ “Father, **I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worth to be called your son.** But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet...’”
- ⇒ The father defies all logic the hearers would have understood. There are _____ subverted expectations displayed here.
 - ⇒ The father **runs** to the son.
 - ⇒ The father has **compassion** for and **embraces** the son that defrauded him.
 - ⇒ Instead of a Kezazah ceremony (deserved), the father **took the shame** upon himself.
 - ⇒ Instead of a hired hand as the Law allowed, the father **restores the son** to the place of sonship by Grace.
- ⇒ **Key Point →** The parable of the sheep focused on the perspective of a man and the parable of the lost coin on the perspective of women. The parable of the running father is about the perspective of _____.

Luke 15:25-32 → The Older Brother (The Pharisees)

- ⇒ **“But he** (the older son) **was angry and refused to go in.”** → The older brother shows up from the fields and learns that his younger brother is home and he is _____. This contrasts with the response of the father.
- ⇒ **“His father came out and entreated him.”** → Once again the father _____ and meets one of his sons, but this time with different results. The older brother isn’t willing to celebrate the return of the prodigal, he isn’t even willing to go inside. He is _____.
- ⇒ The Root of his resentment → **“Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat that I may celebrate with my friends... But when this son of yours came ... you killed the fattened calf for him!”**
 - Notice the mindset of the Pharisees in the older son. He can’t even call his brother his brother, he calls him “this son of yours”. The older son is _____ at the grace shown to the younger son. You can almost hear him say, he doesn’t deserve to be a son like I do, **how dare you forgive him!** The problem for the older son is that he thinks he doesn’t need forgiveness himself.

Closing Thoughts:

- ⇒ Where are you in this story?