



Continuing in Luke 15

Greetings from Namikango Mission! We are very excited to present another Liu and to continue the conversation we started in the previous issue. Remember with me the story we discussed in the last Liu. In the last Liu we discussed Luke 15 as a house that we can live in and view the world through. We said that the three parables found in chapter 15 of Luke all tell us what God is like, and how God interacts with humanity. We know that when Jesus tells parables, he is giving us a story about who God is and what God thinks about his creation. In Luke 15, Jesus gives us three different stories about God, and each one of these stories gives us very good news!

Remember that the first parable found in Luke 15 talks about a shepherd who realizes he has lost a sheep. The good shepherd goes out into the wilderness in order to find the lost sheep. He searches high and low, often through dangerous terrain in order to restore his lost sheep to the flock. This shepherd is good, precisely because he cares so much for his sheep. No sheep is too lost or too far away to escape the love of the good shepherd.

In the same way, God searches for us when we are lost. He does not abandon us to the wilderness to die, nor does he search us out to punish us for getting lost in the first place. Instead, God searches for us because he loves us and wants to protect us from the dangers of the wilderness. And when God finds us, he does not punish us, but carries us back to the flock where we can be safe and protected.

While this parable presents very good news for us, we know that it is only one of three parables that Jesus tells in Luke 15. In this issue of the Liu we want to move from the first parable about the good

shepherd searching for his sheep to Jesus' second parable, that of a good woman who searches for her lost coin.

Keep the details of the parable about the good shepherd in your mind as you explore this second parable, and see if there are any connections between the two stories. Ask yourself how the good shepherd and the good woman are similar. Also, ask yourself what Jesus is trying to say with this second parable. Does this second parable about the good woman also give us good news?

As we said last time, while you are reading and reflecting on this second parable, try to find yourself in the story. Imagine how you would respond if you lost your coin, and imagine how the coin feels being lost and found. Finally, ask yourself what you can learn about God in this parable. May you discover new things about yourself and about God as you reflect on this second parable in Luke 15.

By: Eric Gephart

The Parable of the Lost Coin

Remember from the previous article that the context of these three parables (Sheep, Coin, Sons) are Jesus' teachings to two groups of people: the "sinners" and the "Pharisees" (15:1-3). Also, remember that the shepherd went out to search for the sheep, found the sheep and rejoiced over the sheep with friends. Now, we have the second parable, the parable of the lost coin. Here we have a similar parable but reduced in size. Instead of a vast land, we have one room. Instead of 100 sheep, we have 10 coins. Yet still just 1 coin (like the 1 sheep) is lost.

Though shepherds in Jesus' day (and in our day) could be either men or women, this parable is about a good woman. She, like the good shepherd, is concerned for the lost coin. Maybe she is afraid her husband will be angry with her or maybe she values the coin to pay school fees. Either way, she sees the value in the coin and sweeps the house, gets on her hands and knees to find this one lost coin; a big effort for a single small coin. Much like many older homes built in Malawi, this house probably has no windows and is thus very dark. The floor is probably made of brick or stone, so the coin could fall in between cracks and be very difficult to see.

Unlike the sheep, the coin did not wander away. It did not try to get lost. It did not run away from the owner. It was lost by the owner; misplaced or forgotten for a time until the owner realized and began to search for it. But finally, the owner, the good woman finds the coin! She calls her friends, "Come rejoice with me, I have found the lost coin!" This is how it is when God searches for each one of us (his lost coin) and finds us! There is a great party in heaven because of the love that God has for each of his coins.

This story is a parable. It is not intended to give us new information but rather it asks the reader to live in the story. Who are you in this story today? Are you lost and need to be found? Are you searching and praying for someone else to be found? Or maybe you are found – like the other 9 coins – and are sitting and waiting, unsure

Luke 15:8-10

"Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 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 in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

of what you are to do. This passage calls you to act today. This parable asks you if you have the same heart as the good woman, the same heart of God? Are you like the good woman and doing everything possible just to find one coin, one person? Do you rejoice over one person's redemption? Do you desire to see others restored to God? Or do you not care about your brother and sister who are lost? Do you only spend your time watching football, listening to the radio or doing your business, or do you also actively seek those who your community considers to be "lost coins"? Jesus called us to do what he had been doing (Luke 4:14-19; Luke 19:10), to seek and save the lost, to heal the lives of the wounded and the sinners, that they may know that God loves them enough to die for them.

This parable shows us that we cannot just sit once we are found. We are reconciled (found) to be ambassadors for reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). We are to show other people how much God loves them and how much God wants them to be reconciled to God. How can we stop searching for lost coins when we know God is always searching for them? How can we be content to let people remain lost when God is not content to let people remain lost? God will not stop searching for you until you are found. Will you stop searching for your brother or sister until they

are found? Let us become like the good woman today – searching for the lost coins in our own communities until they are found, then rejoicing over them.

By: Ryan Hayes

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. Who are you today? The good woman or the lost coin?
2. What are the similarities between the lost sheep and the lost coin stories?
3. What are the similarities between the good shepherd and the good woman?
4. How does seeing God as a good woman/mother help us understand the nature of God even more? Read these verses for more reflection: Isaiah 66:10-13; Deuteronomy 32:18; Isaiah 46:3-4; Luke 13:34.
5. How does the parable of the lost coin add understanding to the parable of the lost sheep?
6. If God is like the good woman, how can this add to our understanding of the role of church in seeking the lost?
7. If you have been a part of breaking a relationship with someone inside the church or outside, how will you now act like the good woman and seek to restore that relationship?

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.
Isaiah 46:3-4

Further Reading

Now that we have spent some time reflecting on Jesus' second parable about the good woman and her lost coin, we can connect this parable to the rest of the biblical story. In this section, I would like to offer some other scriptures for you to read and reflect on. As you read through these passages, ask yourself what you are learning about God and about people in each passage.

Also, ask yourself how these passages can be understood through Jesus' parable of the good woman and her lost coin. Can you connect these passages to gain a clearer and bigger picture of God and his love for us?

In Psalm 23 we see the psalmist praising God and describing God in different ways. In verses 1-3 the psalmist describes God as a good shepherd who provides for the needs of his sheep. God feeds his sheep, waters his sheep, and protects them. However, the image changes from the good shepherd to that of a good woman. In verse 5 the psalmist says that God prepares a table for him to eat at, anoints him with oil, and provides a house for the psalmist to dwell in.

All these activities are typically done by the wife of the house. Just as it is in Malawi today, so in biblical times it was typically the wife who prepared the table and food, who welcomed visitors to the house, and who kept the house clean and orderly. Therefore, in this famous psalm, we see God described as both a good shepherd and good woman, just as Jesus does in Luke 15! Here are other psalms for you to read and reflect on:

Psalm 17:8-9

Psalm 36:7-9

Psalm 57:1

Psalm 61:4

Psalm 123:2

Psalm 131:2

In Numbers 11 the Israelites are wandering around in the desert. After some time, they get very upset by how much time they are spending in the wilderness, and they begin complaining to Moses and God. Moses becomes angry and asks God to intervene in their situation. In verse 12, Moses asks God if the Israelites are the children of Moses or the children of God. Moses admits that the people need a mother to watch over them, but that Moses cannot fulfill that role.

Therefore, Moses asks God to care for the people as a mother would care for her children. Read and reflect on these passages from the Old Testament. As you read the scriptures, ask yourself what these stories tell us about God and how he interacts with people. How do the biblical authors describe God?

Numbers 11:12

Deuteronomy 32:11-12

Deuteronomy 32:18

In Isaiah 49:15 God says, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.” In this verse God says that a good mother will not forget about her children but will constantly show her children compassion. Then God says that he is like these good mothers, he will not forget about us, his children. God is like the good woman, he

remembers his people, he protects them and cares for them. This is really good news for us! Reflect on these passages from the prophets in the Old Testament Ask yourself how Isaiah and Hosea describe God and what that tells us about how God cares for us.

Isaiah 42:14

Isaiah 46:3-4

Isaiah 66:10-13

Hosea 11:34

Hosea 13:8

Read the following passages from the New Testament. As you read each passage, take time to answer two questions: What does this passage say about humanity? And how does this passage describe God and his interaction with humanity?

Matthew 23:37

Luke 13:34

1 Peter 1:22-23

1 John 3:9-10