



### Luke 15:1-32

**1** The tax collectors and the sinners, meanwhile, were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, **2** and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man,' they said, 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' **3** So he spoke this parable to them:

**4** 'What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it? **5** And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders **6** and then, when he got home, call together his friends, and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," he would say, "I have found my sheep that was lost." **7** In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance.

**8** 'Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? **9** And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," she would say, "I have found the drachma I lost." **10** In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.'

Other readings: Exodus 32:7-11,13-14 Psalm 50 (51) 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke contains three parables: the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son. The first two parables are given above and we will focus on these. The parable of the prodigal son was read this year on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

The evangelist gathers these three parables together because they all teach us about the joy of God at the repentance of the sinner. The opening verses tell us about those among Jesus' hearers who were severely critical of his welcome to sinners. They 'complained'. The Greek word in the original text of the gospel also means 'grumble'. Those who complain here are like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son who refuses to join the celebration of his younger brother's return. The first two parables are rather startling. Would a shepherd really leave the care of ninety-nine sheep to search for one? Would a woman who found a lost coin really put on a feast to celebrate? The lack of realism in these parables teaches us that God's behaviour goes far beyond human normality. God forgives in an outstanding way. In giving us a Saviour God shows a love far beyond any human love. The scribes and Pharisees found the forgiving love of God hard to accept. But what about us?

*Do I rejoice at the return of the sinner or consider God to be soft?*

*Do I try to stretch my heart and mind to grasp the extraordinary ways of God?*

*Let us pray for those who grumble at the forbearance of God.*

*Let us pray for those trying to find forgiveness.*