



ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS  
-  
PARABLES 5

A thick black L-shaped frame surrounds the text. The top-left corner is a horizontal bar extending to the right, and the bottom-right corner is a vertical bar extending upwards. The text is centered within the open space of the frame.

# WELCOME TO “PARABLES”

Each week we will delve into the background, imagery  
and challenge of the parables of Jesus..



# Reflection



- What have I learnt about God's kingdom tonight?
- Have these parables deepened my understanding of God's character in any way?



# So, how to listen to a parable?



- **Ask** questions of course!
- **Ask:** What are the corresponding features talking about? (Sower, seed, pearl, banquet etc)
- **Ask:** What would have surprised or shocked the original hearers?
- **Ask:** What is Jesus wanting to teach about his kingdom that is *different* to the accepted wisdom?
- **Ask:** How might this parable be challenging me or my understanding of God's kingdom?



# Lost sheep



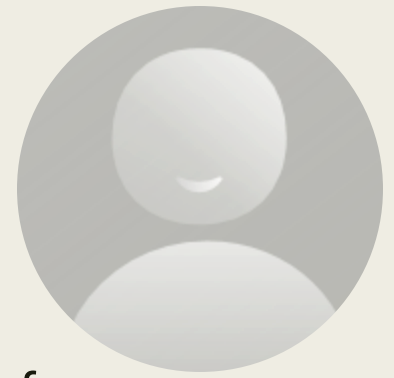
- <sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”
- <sup>3</sup>So he told them this **parable**: <sup>4</sup>“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup>And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ <sup>7</sup>Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.



# The setup (context)



- <sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”
- Who are the “tax collectors and sinners”?
- Why were they “drawing near” to Jesus? What was attracting them?
- Why are the Pharisees and scribes grumbling?
- What can you tell about the religious views of the Pharisees and scribes by their reaction?



# The Parable

- <sup>3</sup>So he told them this **parable**: <sup>4</sup>“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup>And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’
- What does the sheep represent in the parable?
- What does the shepherd represent?
- What are some ways a sheep could become lost?
- How much rejoicing going on?



# How it landed?

- *Anything shocking or unusual here?*
- Shepherds typically valued the **safety of the flock** as a whole. Leaving the **99 sheep** in the open country would expose them to dangers like predators or thieves.
- **Ancient Near Eastern shepherds** would often work in **groups** or employ helpers, so leaving the flock might have been possible if other shepherds could guard the 99. However, this is not mentioned in the parable, highlighting the shepherd's personal commitment to the lost sheep.
- **Jeremias** in *The Parables of Jesus* suggests that the shepherd's action might have been shocking to Jesus' audience, emphasizing the **extraordinary lengths** to which God goes to reclaim the lost (Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 131).
- What do you think?





# Lost sheep

- **Ask:** *How might this parable be challenging me or my understanding of God's kingdom?*
- Retell the parable according to what we know of the attitudes of the Scribes and Pharisees.
- *A man had a hundred sheep, and one of them left his flock and wandered off, leaving ninety nine in the open country. So he said, " ..... "Rejoice with me that...."*
- Who is the "tax collector and sinner" for me?
- How do *I* view someone who leaves my flock?
- How does Jesus want us to view the "tax collector and sinner"?
- What would this mean in practice?



# Lost sheep – Last word

- [7](#) Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.
- What is this telling us?
- How has Jesus framed attitudes to the “tax collector and sinner” in his kingdom?
- Mt 18:14 In the same way, your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish
- How has Matthew applied this parable?
- Look after people.



# Lost coin



- Or what woman, having ten silver coins,<sup>a</sup> if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? <sup>9</sup>And 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.’ <sup>10</sup>Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”
- Notice any similarities to the lost son parable?



# The coins



- **Theory:** The ten coins could have been part of a **woman's dowry** or a **marriage headdress**, often made up of a string of coins worn as a head ornament.
- In **Middle Eastern culture**, such coins were often given to a bride as a form of security or adornment, representing her **marital status** and **economic security**. (*Bailey, Kenneth E. Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke (1976), p. 154.*)
- **Theory:** The ten coins could simply represent the woman's **household savings**.
- In the **first-century Jewish context**, women were often responsible for managing household finances, and a **drachma** was equivalent to a **day's wages**.
- Losing one coin would be a significant financial concern, especially for someone of modest means. (*Jeremias, Joachim. The Parables of Jesus (1972), p. 134.*)
- **Theory:** The number **ten** is often symbolic in **biblical literature**, representing **completeness** or **wholeness**.
  - Losing one coin disrupts this completeness, symbolizing how God views the loss of even one sinner as a disruption to the wholeness of His kingdom. The **celebration** upon finding the coin parallels the **heavenly rejoicing** over a repentant sinner.
- (*Snodgrass, Klyne R. Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus (2008), p. 112.*)



## Συγχαίρω

- **Συγχαίρω** (soong-khah'-ee-ro)
- **σύν** (su'n) = with
- **Χαίρω** (kha-ee-ro) = rejoice, rejoice exceedingly
- So... rejoice with
- Reflect on the idea of “rejoicing with”. What does it take to achieve that?





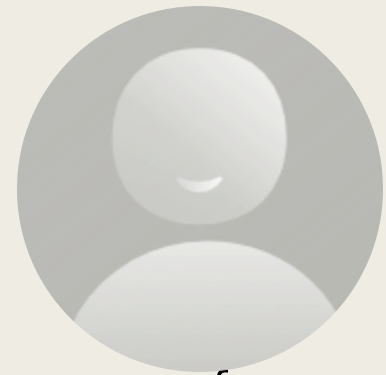
# Lost Son



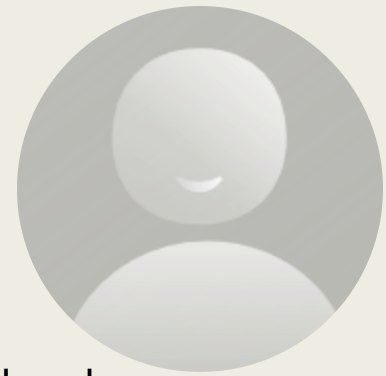
- [11](#)And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. [12](#)And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. [13](#)Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. [14](#)And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. [15](#)So he went and hired himself out to <sup>b</sup> one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. [16](#)And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.



# Lost Son



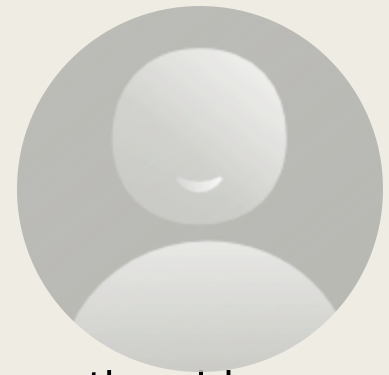
- <sup>17</sup>“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’<sup>20</sup>And he arose and came to his 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. <sup>21</sup>And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.



# Lost Son

- <sup>25</sup>Meanwhile the older son was in the field, and as he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>So he called one of the servants and asked what was going on.
- <sup>27</sup>'Your brother has returned,' he said, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup>The older son became angry and refused to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him.
- <sup>29</sup>But he answered his father, 'Look, all these years I have served you and never disobeyed a commandment of yours. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours returns from squandering your wealth with prostitutes, you kill the fattened calf for him!'
- <sup>31</sup>'Son, you are always with me,' the father said, 'and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup>But it was fitting to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"





# Lost Son

- Characters: who do the Father, the younger son, the older son, the hired servants represent?
- What does the *family* in the parable represent?
- What are the main parts of the story?
  - *Younger son asking for inheritance and leaving.*
  - *Younger son living wildly until he ran out of money.*
  - *Younger son deciding to humbly return.*
  - *Exuberant forgiveness and joy of the Father.*
  - *Older brother's reaction.*
- Compare for a moment how this parable resonates with you in comparison with the lost sheep and the lost coin. What do you notice?

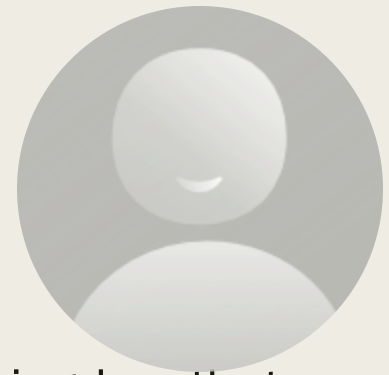


# Lost Son – What’s shocking?

- **Asking for inheritance while father still alive** = “wishing your father was dead”. Deeply disrespectful and a breach of family honour and patriarchal authority.
- **Father’s willingness to grant the request** – unexpected and counter-cultural.
- **Son’s squandering of inheritance in a foreign land** – also among Gentiles. We might even react to this one.
- **Feeding the pigs** – ritual defilement.
- **Joyful reception of the Father** – shocking because it defied the expected anger and retributive justice.
- **Behaviour of the older brother** – self-righteousness and lack of grace. Older brother expected to mediate in family disputes.
- **Father’s plea to the elder son** - humility and desire for reconciliation broke social norms about maintaining hierarchical family dynamics.



# Lost Son



- What is Jesus wanting to teach about his kingdom that is *different* to the accepted wisdom?
- The kingdom **does not** follow patriarchal culture!
- Vastly expanded possibility of redemption.
- The father desires reconciliation, not estrangement.
- Anything else?



# Lost Son – the older brother



- What is Jesus wanting to teach through the character of the older brother?
- He is high lighting the difference in heart between the father (unconditional, exuberant joy, and forgiveness) versus the brother (jealousy, meanness).
- What else do you notice about the older brother?
- He never asked for anything!.... Father wants to throw parties but he just trudges on. Do you recognise this kind of religious attitude?



# Reflection



- What have I learnt about God's kingdom tonight?
- Have these parables deepened my understanding of God's character in any way?



## Next time

- Unforgiving Servant
- Workers in the vineyard