LUKE 15

Lost and Found

a shepherd on the hills, a woman with a lamp, a father on the road — and an older brother outside the party

> *"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."*
> LUKE 15:20

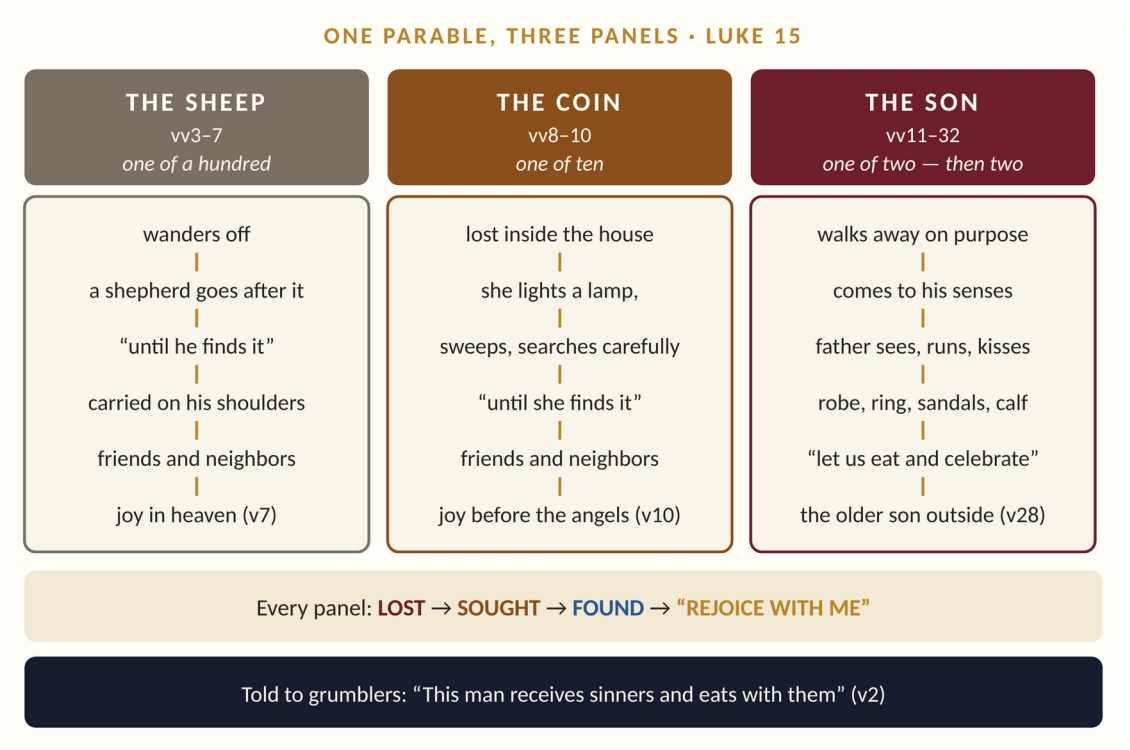
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where we are in Luke

1. Luke 15 follows straight on from the hard sayings of chapter 14 — count the cost, carry your cross, salt that has lost its taste is "thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (14:35).

2. The complaint is an old one in Luke.

3. Jesus answers with one parable in three panels (v. 3, "this parable").



This Man Receives Sinners

Sinners come near, the Pharisees grumble, and a shepherd goes after one sheep

LUKE 15:4

"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

DAVID GUZIK

Hard words attracted sinners; He searches, not grudgingly receives.

R.C. SPROUL

Driven by compassion; the lost must first be found.

C.H. SPURGEON

Only sinners come — and none who knocked was refused.

MATTHEW HENRY

He calls it His sheep, though a stray; God delights in grace.

διεγόγγυζον

DIEGONGYZON · "BEGAN TO GRUMBLE"

From diagongyzō, the ordinary word for muttering (gongyzō, the sound of a low complaint) with dia, "through," added: a grumble that goes all through the crowd.

A Lamp, a Broom, a Coin

A woman searches her house until she finds what she lost

LUKE 15:8

"Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

DAVID GUZIK

She kept looking; we seldom think of God rejoicing.

R.C. SPROUL

A destitute woman's coin; angels rejoice, the devil complains.

C.H. SPURGEON

Lost but not forgotten; candle, broom, joy.

MATTHEW HENRY

There is always joy in heaven over penitents.

δραχμή

DRACHMĒ · "SILVER COIN"

A Greek silver coin, roughly a day's wage for a laborer, about the same as a Roman denarius.

When He Came to His Senses

A demand, a distant country, a famine, a pig field — and a speech rehearsed for home

LUKE 15:13

"And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

DAVID GUZIK

Love allowed rebellion; the son was completely to blame.

R.C. SPROUL

I want it now; came to himself, not by himself.

MATTHEW HENRY

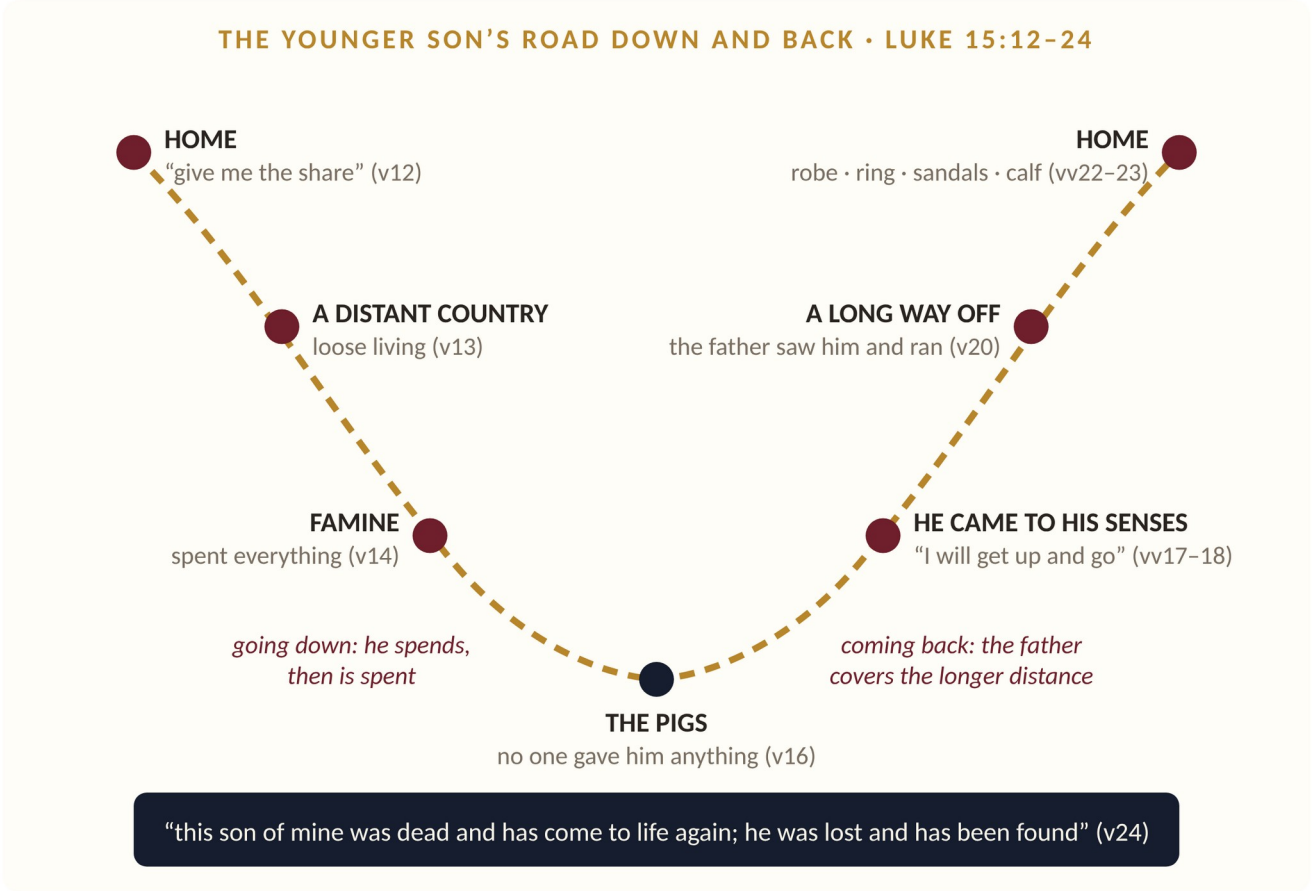
Wilful waste brings woeful want; husks are for swine.

ἀσώτως

ASŌTŌS · "WITH LOOSE LIVING"

An adverb built on a-, "not," and sōzō, "to save": living like a man who cannot be saved, wastefully, recklessly.

The road down and back



Follow the younger son down from his demand to the pig pen, then back up the road — where the father runs to cover the last stretch.

His Father Ran

Compassion, an embrace, a confession cut short, and a feast

LUKE 15:20

"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

DAVID GUZIK

Love waited and never forgot; no probation.

R.C. SPROUL

Old legs running; the robe of Christ's righteousness.

C.H. SPURGEON

God sees, weeps within, and does not stop at compassion.

MATTHEW HENRY

Kindness before repentance; how swift God is to show mercy.

σπλαγχνίζομαι

SPLANCHNIZOMAI · "FELT COMPASSION"

From splanchna, the inward parts — a mercy felt in the gut.

The Son Who Would Not Go In

Music from the house, an angry older brother, and a father who comes out to plead

LUKE 15:28

"But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.

DAVID GUZIK

He worked hard — and had every reason to be happy.

R.C. SPROUL

He represents the Pharisees; it is right to rejoice.

MATTHEW HENRY

Not the Spirit of Christ but of the Pharisees; you lose nothing.

τέκνου

TEKNON · "SON" (LIT. "CHILD")

In verse 31 the father does not use huios, "son," the word in verses 11–30, but teknon, "child" — a word of tenderness.

Two sons

TWO SONS, BOTH FAR FROM THE FATHER'S HEART

	THE YOUNGER SON	THE OLDER SON
Where he is	a distant country (v13)	in the field, near the house (v25)
His sin	loose living, open and public (v13)	anger that would not go in (v28)
How he sees himself	"no longer worthy" (vv19, 21)	"never neglected a command" (v29)
How he sees the father	comes home to a father (v18)	"serving you" — like a hired man (v29)
What he asks for	"give me" (v12), then "make me" (v19)	"you have never given me" (v29)
Where the story leaves him	inside, at the feast (v24)	outside, being pleaded with (vv28, 32)

The father goes out to both: he runs to one (v20) and comes out to plead with the other (v28).

Compare the two columns: one son is lost far from home, the other is lost standing next to the house.

What to carry from this chapter

1

The worst people came to listen.

After the hardest sermon on discipleship (14:25–35), it was tax collectors and sinners who drew near (15:1).

2

One parable in three panels.

Luke says “this parable” (v3), singular.

3

Lost means perishing.

Apollymi is “lost” for the sheep, coin and son — and “dying” in the son’s own mouth (v17).

4

The seeker does the finding.

A sheep cannot repent and a coin cannot search.

More to carry

5

God rejoices.

Verses 7 and 10 give a rare look into heaven's mood.

6

He came to himself — not by himself.

Sproul: "Nobody ever comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ without that divine and supernatural light."

7

The father covers the longer distance.

The son walks; the father runs (v20).

8

Kisses before the confession is finished.

The son never gets to "make me as one of your hired men" (v19 vs. v21).

Talk it through

1. Tax collectors and sinners came near to listen to Jesus. Would the men I know who are far from God feel welcome to come near me — or would they hear grumbling?

2. Neither the sheep nor the coin could find its way back. Where do I still think I have to find God, when He has been looking for me?

3. What was my “distant country” — and what was the moment I came to my senses?

4. The son rehearsed a speech, but the father ran and kissed him before he could finish it. What keeps me trying to earn a place God has already given me?

5. Am I more like the younger son or the older son right now? Where do I see the older brother’s anger in myself?

CLOSING

Luke 15 starts with a complaint and ends with an invitation. A shepherd, a woman and a father all go looking, and heaven throws a party every time a sinner is found. If you are far off, get up and go home — your Father is already running. If you have been home all along, go in to the feast.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Luke study page.