SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Luke 15

Lost and Found — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God goes looking for lost people and throws a party when He finds them. The only person in this chapter who misses the feast is the one who thought he never needed to be found.

00 The Text

LUKE 15 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.

2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

3 So He told them this parable, saying,

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?

5 "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 "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 which was lost!'

7 "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

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?

9 "When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!'

10 "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

11 And He said, "A man had two sons.

12 "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.

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.

14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.

15 "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

17 “But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How
many of my father’s hired men have more than enough
bread, but I am dying here with hunger!
18 ‘I will get up and go to my father, and will say to
him, “Father,
I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;
19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me
as one of your hired men.”’
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.
21 “And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against
heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be
called your son.’
22 “But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out
the best robe and put it on him, and put
a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;
23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and
celebrate;
24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life
again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they
began to celebrate.
25 “Now his older son was in the field, and when he came
and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.
26 “And he summoned one of the servants and began
inquiring what these things could be.
27 “And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your
father has killed the fattened calf because he has
received him back safe and sound.’
28 “But he became angry and was not willing to go in;
and his father came out and began pleading with him.
29 “But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look!
For so many years I have been serving you and I have
never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have
never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate
with my friends;
30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured
your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf
for him.’
31 “And he said to him,
‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is
mine is yours.
32 ‘But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother
of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was
lost and has been found.’”

Marked in the text

- **v1** “the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him” — Time / place / contrast
- **v2** “began to grumble” — Sin / warning
- **v2** “This man receives sinners and eats with them” — God — His character & actions
- **v4** “go after the one which is lost until he finds it” — God — His character & actions
- **v5** “he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing” — God — His character & actions
- **v7** “more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents” — Promise / blessing
- **v8** “search carefully until she finds it” — God — His character & actions
- **v10** “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” — Promise / blessing
- **v12** “give me the share of the estate that falls to me” — Sin / warning
- **v13** “a distant country” — Time / place / contrast
- **v13** “squandered his estate with loose living” — Sin / warning
- **v16** “no one was giving anything to him” — Sin / warning
- **v17** “when he came to his senses” — Time / place / contrast
- **v18** “I will get up and go to my father” — Command / instruction
- **v18** “I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight” — Command / instruction
- **v20** “while he was still a long way off” — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** “felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him” — God — His character & actions
- **v22** “the best robe” — Promise / blessing
- **v22** “a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet” — Promise / blessing
- **v28** “he became angry and was not willing to go in” — Sin / warning
- **v28** “his father came out and began pleading with him” — God — His character & actions
- **v29** “For so many years I have been serving you” — Sin / warning
- **v31** “Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours” — Promise / blessing
- **v32** “we had to celebrate and rejoice” — Command / instruction

- **v4** “lost” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v5** “found” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v4** “finds” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v6** “Rejoice” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v7** “joy” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v24** “was dead and has come to life again” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v32** “was dead and has begun to live” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

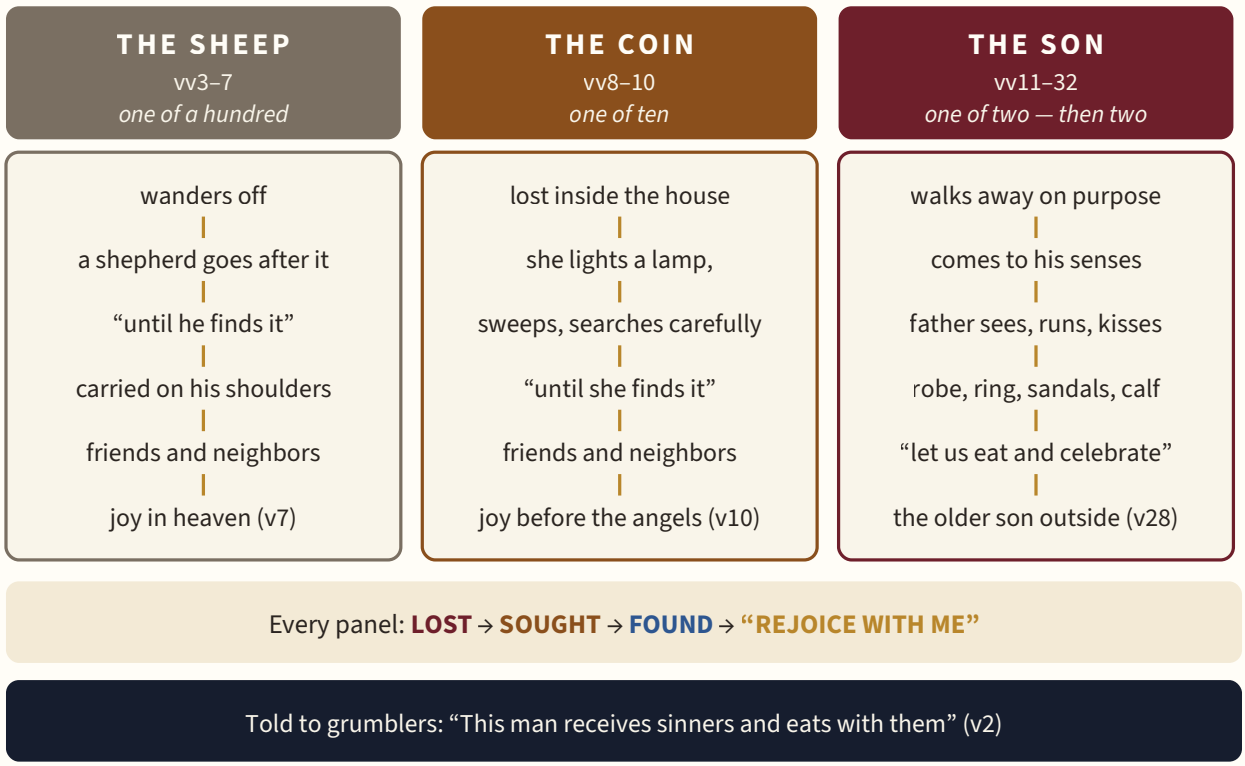
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 15:2

"Both the Pharisees and the scribes ⚠ began to grumble, saying, "⚠ This man receives sinners and eats with them.""

FIGURE · ONE PARABLE, THREE PANELS



Read across: each panel narrows the odds and ends the same way — lost, sought, found, and friends called in to rejoice.

Setting. Somewhere on the road to Jerusalem (9:51), right after Jesus' hard words on the cost of discipleship (14:25–35). Tax collectors and sinners are coming near to listen; the Pharisees and scribes grumble, "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (vv1–2). Jesus answers with "this parable" (v3) in three panels.

Structure:

- vv1–7 — **the grumbling and the lost sheep:** sinners draw near; the Pharisees grumble (vv1–2); a man with a hundred sheep leaves the ninety-nine and goes after the one "until he finds it" (v4); carries it home on his shoulders, rejoicing; "Rejoice with me" (vv5–6); more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (v7).

- vv8–10 — **the lost coin:** ten silver coins, one lost; she lights a lamp, sweeps, searches carefully (v8); "Rejoice with me" (v9); joy in the presence of the angels of God (v10).
- vv11–19 — **the son who left:** "give me the share of the estate" (v12); a distant country, loose living (v13); famine, pigs, pods, no one gave him anything (vv14–16); he came to his senses — "I will get up and go to my father" (vv17–19).
- vv20–24 — **the father who ran:** a long way off, the father saw him, felt compassion, ran, embraced and kissed him (v20); the confession (v21); robe, ring, sandals, fattened calf (vv22–23); "dead … alive again; lost … found" (v24).
- vv25–32 — **the older brother:** music and dancing (v25); "Your brother has come" (vv26–27); angry, would not go in; the father comes out and pleads (v28); "so many years I have been serving you" (vv29–30); "Son, you have always been with me" — "we had to celebrate" (vv31–32).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "father" ×12 — vv12 (×2), 17, 18 (×2), 20 (×2), 21, 22, 27, 28, 29; plus "father's" v17.
- "son(s)" ×9 — vv11, 13, 19, 21 (×2), 24, 25, 30, 31.
- "came / come / comes / coming" ×9 — vv1, 6, 17, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30.
- "found / finds" ×8 — vv4, 5, 6, 8, 9 (×2), 24, 32.
- "lost" ×6 — vv4 (×2), 6, 9, 24, 32.
- "rejoice / rejoicing / joy" ×6 — vv5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 32.
- "celebrate" ×4 — vv23, 24, 29, 32.
- "sinner(s)" ×4 — vv1, 2, 7, 10; "repents / repentance" ×3 — vv7 (×2), 10; "sinned" ×2 — vv18, 21.
- "estate / wealth" ×4 — vv12 (×2), 13, 30.
- "friends" ×3 — vv6, 9, 29; "fattened calf" ×3 — vv23, 27, 30.
- "dead / dying" ×3 — vv17, 24, 32; "famine / impoverished / hunger" ×3 — vv14 (×2), 17.
- "brother" ×2 — vv27, 32; "hired men" ×2 — vv17, 19.

Contrasts: Sinners drawing near ⟷ Pharisees grumbling (vv1–2). Ninety-nine ⟷ one (vv4, 7). Lost ⟷ found; dead ⟷ alive (vv24, 32). A distant country ⟷ my father's house (vv13, 17). Pods for pigs ⟷ the fattened calf (vv16, 23). "Give me" (v12) ⟷ "make me" (v19). "No longer worthy to be called your son" ⟷ robe, ring and sandals (vv21–22). Inside celebrating ⟷ outside angry (vv25, 28). "This son of yours" ⟷ "this brother of yours" (vv30, 32). Serving like a slave ⟷ "all that is mine is yours" (vv29, 31).

Shape of the chapter: three stories that get longer and more personal — an animal, a coin, a son — each ending in a party. The last story has a second act with no ending: the older son is still outside, and the father is still pleading.

Chapter theme (my words): God is the seeker. He goes after the lost, waits for the runaway and runs to meet him, and calls everyone to rejoice when a sinner comes home. The danger is not only running away from the Father but standing next to His house with a heart that will not go in.

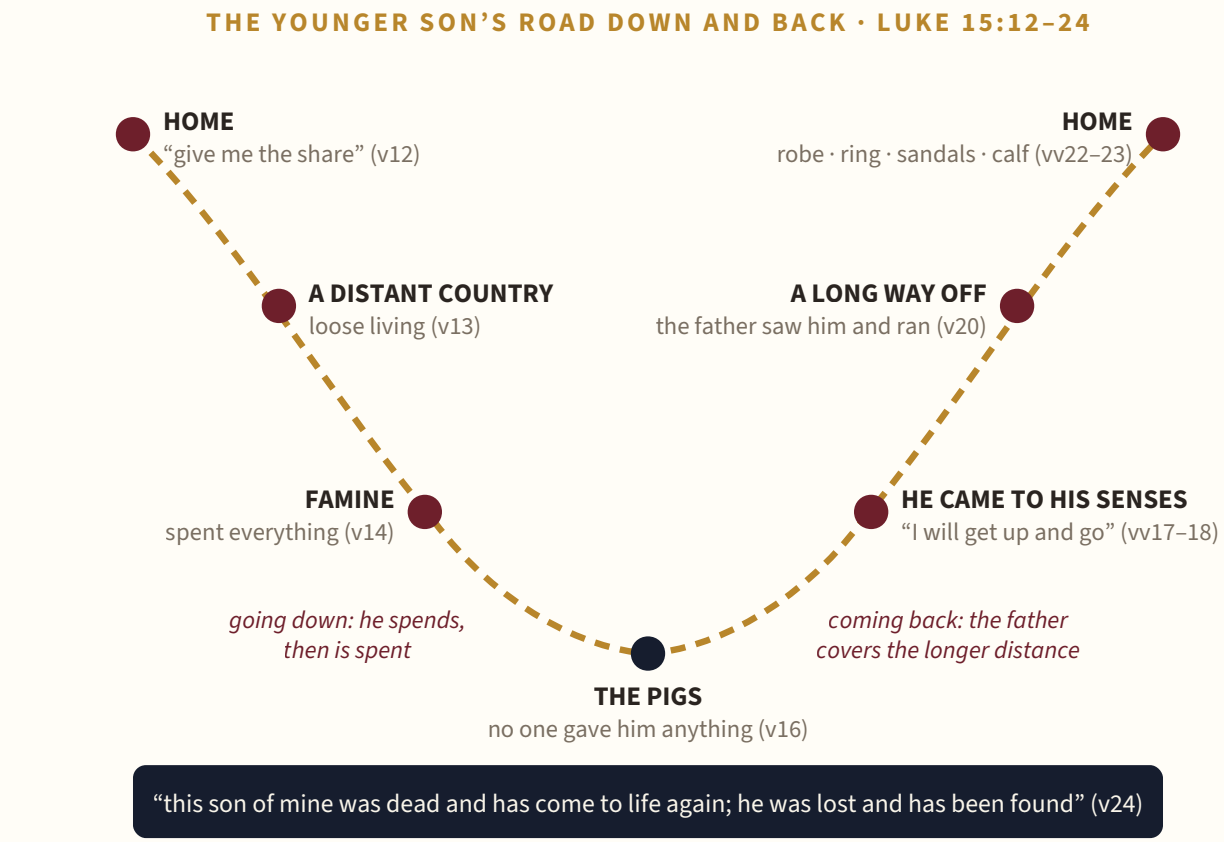
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 15:24

“for this son of mine ☆was dead and has come to life again; ☆he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.”

FIGURE · 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.

Who is Jesus answering? The grumblers of verse 2. All three panels are aimed at them (“What man among you …?” v4). Sproul: Jesus’ table fellowship “violated every principle they held precious.” Guzik: “This answered the complaint of the religious leaders that began the chapter.” The tax collectors hear grace; the Pharisees hear an invitation and a warning.

Who are the “ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (v7)? Teachers differ. Sproul reads them as the already-justified who remain in the fold. Others take the phrase as gentle irony toward the Pharisees, who thought they needed no repentance. Either way, the point of the verse is heaven’s joy over the one.

Can a sheep or a coin repent? No — and that is the point. In the first two stories the seeker does everything. Guzik: "God finds the sinner more than the sinner does find God." Yet Jesus still says "one sinner who repents" (vv7, 10). Repentance is what being found looks like in a person; the third story shows it from the inside.

What does "came to his senses" mean? Literally "came to himself" (v17). Sproul makes it the hinge — he came to himself, "not by himself," because "Nobody ever comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ without that divine and supernatural light." The son's turn has a true thought (my father's hired men eat), a decision ("I will get up and go") and a confession ("I have sinned against heaven"). Henry: "Good purposes are good things, but still good performances are all in all."

Why does the father run? Because he has been watching (Guzik: "The father's love waited and never forgot") and because compassion moves the feet (*splanchnizomai*, as with the Good Samaritan, 10:33). Sproul pictures "weak and elderly legs" running down the road. The son never gets to the hired-man part of his speech (v19 vs. v21).

What do the robe, ring, sandals and calf mean? Restored sonship and celebration. Sproul reads the robe as Christ's righteousness — "No one has ever entered the kingdom of God without wearing the robe of the righteousness of Christ" — and the ring as the sign that "he is not a servant or slave." Guzik: "It was a love that fully received, not putting the son on probation."

Who is the older son? The Pharisees and scribes of verse 2 (Sproul: he "represents the Pharisees and their complaints"). He never left home, yet he talks like a slave ("serving you," v29), will not call his brother a brother ("this son of yours," v30), and stays outside. Henry: "Those who are comparatively innocents seldom know how to be compassionate towards those who are manifestly penitents."

Why does the story stop without an ending? Jesus leaves the older son at the door so the grumblers will finish it themselves. The father's last words are both tender and firm: "Son [child], you have always been with me … But we had to celebrate" (vv31–32).

Word study (Greek):

- **grumble — *diagongyzō* (G1234):** a muttering that runs through the crowd; only Luke 15:2; 19:7.
- **lost — *apollymi* (G622):** to lose, to perish; "lost" vv4, 6, 9, 24, 32 and "dying" v17.
- **silver coin — *drachmē* (G1406):** about a day's wage; only Luke 15:8–9.
- **repents — *metanoeō* (G3340):** a change of mind that turns the life; vv7, 10.
- **loose living — *asōtōs* (G811):** living like a man who cannot be saved; only here (cf. *asōtia*, Eph 5:18).
- **came — *erchomai* (G2064):** "coming to himself" (v17) — and "came to his father" (v20).
- **felt compassion — *splanchnizomai* (G4697):** gut-level mercy; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20.
- **kissed — *kataphileō* (G2705):** kissed warmly, again and again.
- **son / child — *teknon* (G5043):** the father's tender word to the older son (v31).
- **had to — *dei* (G1163):** "we had to celebrate" (v32) — heaven's necessity of joy.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The worst people came to listen** (v1; Guzik).
2. **One parable in three panels** — the odds narrow, the joy doesn't (v3).
3. **Lost means perishing** — *apollymi* (vv4, 17, 24).
4. **The seeker does the finding** (Guzik).

5. **God rejoices** (vv7, 10; Henry, Spurgeon).
6. **He came to himself — not by himself** (Sproul).
7. **The father covers the longer distance** (v20; Spurgeon).
8. **Kisses before the confession is finished** (vv19, 21).
9. **A son can be lost at home** (vv25–28; Henry).
10. **The story ends with a question** — will the older son go in?

Cross-references: Ps 51:4; Isa 40:11; 53:6; Jer 31:20; Ezek 33:11; 34:11–16; Luke 5:30–32; 7:34; 9:22; 10:33; 14:25–35; 19:7–10; John 10:11; Rom 5:8; Eph 2:4–5, 13; 5:18; 1 Tim 1:15; 2 Pet 3:9.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 15:10

"In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

FIGURE · 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.

Example to follow — the seekers. The shepherd went after one sheep, the woman lit a lamp and swept, and the father watched the road and ran. Not one of them waited for the lost to fix themselves. This week I will go after one man who has drifted from our group — a call, a visit, a meal — and I will keep looking "until I find him."

Sin to confess — two kinds of lostness. I know the younger son's road: wanting it now, wanting no one watching, spending everything and ending up with nothing. But I also know the older son's heart: keeping score, resenting grace shown to somebody else, staying outside the party. I confess both by name. The far country and the field are both a long way from the Father.

Truth to face — I came to myself, but not by myself. When I hit bottom, it was God who turned the light on. I did not find Him; He found me (Guzik: "God finds the sinner more than the sinner does find God"). That keeps me humble with the men I serve — the light can come on for them too.

Promise to trust — the Father runs. I don't have to finish my speech. The son never got to "make me as one of your hired men." God does not put me on probation; He puts a robe on me — the righteousness of Christ (Sproul). When I come home I am received as a son, not hired as a servant.

Command to obey — get up and go; then go in. If I am still in the far country, the command is verse 18: "I will get up and go to my father." If I have been home all along, the command is verse 32: celebrate and rejoice when a brother comes back. Both sons were invited to the same table.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

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? (15:1–2; 5:30–32) *This man receives sinners and eats with them.*
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? (15:4–10; 19:10) *God finds the sinner more than the sinner does find God (Guzik).*
3. What was my "distant country" — and what was the moment I came to my senses? (15:13–17) *He came to himself, not by himself (Sproul).*
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? (15:18–24; Eph 2:4–5) *It was a love that fully received, not putting the son on probation (Guzik).*
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? (15:25–30) *The comparatively innocent seldom pity the penitent (Henry).*
6. The father said, "we had to celebrate." Whose return to God have I been slow to celebrate? (15:31–32) *It is right that we rejoice when someone who is lost is found (Sproul).*

Worship. The Good Shepherd went after me and carried me home on His shoulders. The Spirit lit the lamp and swept the house until I was found. The Father saw me a long way off, felt compassion, ran, and kissed me before I finished confessing. Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents — and I was that sinner.

Prayer. Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called Your son. Thank You for running to me anyway, for the robe of Christ's righteousness, and for a place at Your table. Keep me from the older brother's heart. Give me Your joy over every lost man who comes home, and send me out after the ones who are still far off. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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