

## Sunday, April 28, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

### Week 22 | Luke 15:1-10 | "Cancel Culture"

Last week, we explored several things that will *disqualify* someone from being a disciple. We learned that should a person take a *good* thing in their life—i.e., family, self, etc.—and displace the *best* thing in their life—i.e., Jesus Christ, they can no longer consider themselves a follower of Jesus. Also, if our *dignity* has displaced our *duty* to Christ, can we really say we're Christians? Lastly, if enthusiasm has displaced pragmatism, we won't be followers of Jesus for very long. Ultimately, **A disciple is distinguished by wholesale devotion to Christ, or they've disqualified themselves.** Discipleship calls us to give up *everything* in our pursuit of the Son of God.

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Cancel culture is a plague. Someone says or does something the populace doesn't like, and suddenly, they're ostracized. That is unless the "guilty party" grovels before the court of public opinion, begging for forgiveness. But even then, there's no guarantee that their supposed transgression will be forgiven. The "canceled" person often remains a pariah with no hope of restoration.

Sadly, even the church can become a place where cancel culture thrives. The one place that ought to be known for grace and wholesale redemption often becomes a place of judgment and wholesale condemnation. Of course, this is *not* to say that some things *shouldn't* be condemned. Sin, for instance, ought to be regularly "canceled" from the pulpit along with any practice that leads a person away from God. However, if we're not careful, believers can fail to discern the differences between a sinner and their sin. Though Christians *insist* that they love the sinner and hate the sin, some find it far easier simply to resent both. In a cruel irony, such believers resonate more with the Pharisees, Jesus' enemies, than Jesus himself!

Today's passage demonstrates that every *person* is welcome at Jesus' table, so long as they repent. An unrepentant person will get themselves uninvited from God's kingdom. Heaven is *not* the place for the self-righteous but the place where the unrighteous are made righteous. The Son of God came to seek and save what was lost—i.e., those who've been "canceled." And anyone, yes, *anyone* who humbles themselves before God will be accepted by God.

I want you to notice **three** things:

- i. The Lord **receives** lost people.

**READ:** Luke 15:1-2 (ESV)

<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.”

The Greek word underlying the term "receives" resembles the modern-day word "hosts."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it's in the present tense, thus implying a habitual or ongoing behavior. Hence, whenever the Lord held a dinner party, the guests weren't what the Pharisees considered polite company. He sat down to eat with sinners and tax collectors alike.

At this time, table fellowship was a show of solidarity. As such, the religious elite interpreted Jesus' behavior as a sign that he endorsed and even approved of their lifestyles. It seems they forgot what Jesus told them after he Levi the tax collector to be an apostle: "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Lu. 5:32). **Jesus epitomized what it means to hate sin but love the sinner.** He never once affirmed an unholy lifestyle. The Lord would fellowship with anyone to call them repentance.

Pharisees lived a separatist lifestyle. They thought that the more separated they were from the people they deemed "sinful," the more righteous they'd become. Because of this belief, they were extremely conscientious with those they associated with so as to mitigate being defiled. They would barely look at someone who they thought was unworthy. **In other words, they were the precursors to "cancel culture."**

ii. **The Shepherd rescues a lost sheep.**

**READ:** Luke 15:3-7 (ESV)

<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 Lord tells **one** parable in **three** acts. The first story is about a shepherd, the next is about a woman, and the last is about a father. These are not three parables but three stories unified by a singular principle: *joy*. **The Pharisees grumbled and complained about Jesus' friends, so the**

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<sup>1</sup> Garland, David E., *Luke*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), p. 612.

Lord told three stories, the central lesson of which was about joy. In other words, the Son of God wanted to show why his eating with sinners and tax collectors was cause for **celebration** and not **condemnation**.

The first story he tells is about a shepherd who has 100 sheep. **This is not a small flock, but it is also not a large one.**<sup>2</sup> During this time, sheep were a multi-purpose animal. While they could be slaughtered and used for food (e.g., mutton), they were mostly cared for as long as possible so that the sheep could produce as much wool as possible.

**It was customary to count one's sheep throughout the day.** And apparently, as the shepherd counted his sheep, he came up one short. It's just one sheep, and 99% is all right. The shepherd had minimal incentive to go searching for the lost sheep. Yet, upon learning of the missing sheep, Jesus asks this question: "[what shepherd] **does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?**" Notice that this is a **rhetorical question**. The answer to his question was, "Any shepherd who's worth anything would do what this shepherd does." **Even one sheep was valuable, to say nothing of the bond between the animal and its master (cf. Jn. 10:27-28).**

That the shepherd in Jesus' story left the 99 in the "open country" shouldn't bother us. Remember, Jesus' audience was farmers and herders. **Such people would've assumed the shepherd had at least another person helping him.** Even today, small businesses will have more than one employee. And there was undoubtedly more than one shepherd for a flock of this size. Considering that the shepherd is seen returning home with the lost sheep rather than returning to the 99 sheep in the "open country," we can safely assume that whoever was entrusted with the 99 took them back to the farm.<sup>3</sup>

The farmer returns with the sheep, carrying the animal *on his shoulders*. We're not told how far he had to go to find the lost sheep. But, to be clear, **this was no baby lamb; this was an adult sheep.**<sup>4</sup> **Such creatures can weigh anywhere between 100 and 130 lbs.**<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, this may have been a fictitious story. But, as mentioned before, the Lord is describing something that would've been a common occurrence. It would be no surprise to find a bunch of shepherds in

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<sup>2</sup> Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1300, states that a flock of 300 sheep was considered significant.

<sup>3</sup> Garland (2011), p. 614.

<sup>4</sup> The Greek word used is **πρόβατον** (*próbaton*). Had it been a lamb, the term would've been **ἀμνός** (*amnós*) (cf. Act. 8:32).

<sup>5</sup> Kintzel, Ulf, "What is the Ideal Weight for a Market Lamb?" January 14, 2014, *Cornell Small Farms*, <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2014/01/what-is-the-ideal-weight-for-a-market-lamb/>, [accessed, April 25, 2024].

the audience, likely nodding along as Jesus told his story. **Shepherds had strong backs because they carried wayward sheep back to the fold.**

Upon returning with the lost sheep, the shepherd calls his friends and neighbors and tells them, **“Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.”** This was a time for joy, not judgment. The shepherd did not beat the sheep or grumble about the sheep. The finding of the sheep caused a celebration. The Lord then says, **“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.”**

No doubt, the searching and carrying of the sheep was exhausting. But the joy of finding the sheep outweighed any frustrations the shepherd might've had. The lost can be exhausting. But when we see them turn a corner, we ought to celebrate!

**iii. The Woman retrieves a lost coin.**

**READ:** Luke 15:8-10 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup>“Or what woman, having **ten** silver coins, 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.**”

The story of the woman is much like the story of the shepherd. Like the shepherd, the woman lost something: *a coin*. **But unlike the shepherd with 100 sheep, the woman only at 10 coins.** The term used for “coin” referred to the “drachma,” and one drachma was equal to a day’s wages.<sup>6</sup> The woman did not have enough money to survive even two weeks. **She was poor.** Like the shepherd, 1% would’ve been a hit to this woman’s livelihood. But she lost 10% of her income, and it would be crippling. Thus, losing even one coin was cause for great concern.

So, unlike the shepherd story, the woman had much more to lose. This is why Jesus elaborates on the woman's search. He says the woman lit a “**lamp**,” swept “**the house**,” and sought the coin “**diligently**,” she would not quit “**until she finds it**.” Meaning she was not a quitter. She would find that lost coin if she had to dismantle the house itself.

After the woman finds the coin, the similarities between her and the shepherd return. Like the shepherd, the woman calls **“together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I**

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<sup>6</sup> Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1303.

have found the coin that I had lost." She wanted to share her joy with the community. And once again, the earthly celebration is a mirror of the heavenly. Jesus said, "Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Finding the lost takes effort. We'll have to light a lamp, sweep the house, and diligently seek them. Like the woman, we ought to do everything possible to find those who cannot find themselves. Such an endeavor has this guarantee: "Then those who were sad when they planted will be happy when they gather the harvest! Those who cried as they carried the seeds will be happy when they bring in the crops!"

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

Heaven celebrates the **penitent** sinner and grumbles about the **pompous** saint.

In cancel culture, there is little hope for those who've been canceled. But in God's kingdom, there is enough hope for *every* person, regardless of their actions, so long as they repent.

## **Video Description:**

### **The Road to Redemption | Week 22 | "Cancel Culture" (Luke 15:1-10)**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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