

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2015: *The Book of Luke*
Lesson 8 “The Mission of Jesus”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 15:4–7, 11–32; Luke 16:19–31; 18:35–43; 19:1–10.

Memory Text

“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin
- III. The Parable of the Lost Son: Part 1
- IV. The Parable of the Lost Son: Part 2
- V. Lost Opportunities
- VI. Was Blind but Now I See
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “If we were to write a mission statement for Jesus, we could not do any better than to repeat His own words: ‘To seek and to save that which was lost.’” (...) “From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is a story of God seeking after lost humanity. Luke illustrates this truth by using three important parables: the lost sheep (Luke 15:4–7), the lost coin (vss. 8–10), and the lost son (vss. 11–32).” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. How fair and comprehensive is it to write a mission statement for Jesus on the basis of three or four parables? And though they portray an important message, what about the real and ever present danger of reading into them our own preconceived ideas of salvation—ideas that may originate from the Middle Ages or some other time and not from Jesus’ ministry?
3. What do you think Jesus wanted to reveal by telling these three “lost” parables: lost sheep, lost coin and two lost sons? Three words best summarize the message of these parables: lost, found and rejoice. They make it clear that God welcomes and forgives repentant sinners. They also show God’s part: the shepherd seeks the lost sheep; the woman searches for the lost coin. But there is also man’s part that is important: the wayward son willingly returns home in repentance. To emphasize

only one aspect is to give a false view of salvation. Both sides must be kept in mutual relationship and tension.

4. The Pharisees and scribes were scandalized at Jesus' behavior. Jesus not only welcomed various outcasts and taught them, but He went so far as to eat with them! The Pharisees and scribes were still blind to the fact that they themselves were among the lost. The sheep knew it was lost, but could not find the way back. The coin did not know it was lost and could not find its way back. The lost son knew he was lost and was able to return back to his father's house.
5. The party in Heaven, the rejoicing, is an important feature of these parables. In Jewish understanding the two halves of God's creation, Heaven and earth, were meant to fit together and be in harmony with each other. Thus, Luke stresses that if we discover that there is a party going on in Heaven with all the angels participating, we discover how things were meant to be on earth. And if the Pharisees and law experts are grumpy and murmuring, instead of rejoicing that sinners are repenting, then they are out of tune with God's reality.
6. The lesson devotes two days to the parable of the lost son and discusses it in seven parts. While this is a story about the wonderful love and forgiving grace of God, ready to welcome back sinners at the first sign of their repentance, there is more to the story than often assumed.
7. When the father divided the property between the two sons and the younger turned his share into cash, this meant that the land the father owned had been split into two, the younger brother selling off his share to someone else. This brought additional shame on the family besides the shame that the son had already brought on the father by asking for his share before the father's death thus abandoning his obligation to care for his father in his old age. In modern Western cultures children routinely leave homes in the country to pursue their future and fortune in big cities, or even abroad; but in Jesus' culture this would be seen as shameful. Yet the father allows it all and bears these blows without recrimination. Middle Eastern fathers do not behave like that. Any other father would have beaten the son or thrown him out. What does it say to us about God, knowing how He treated Satan after his rebellion in Heaven and how He still treats us, His rebellious children?
8. In the story of the older brother, the parable clearly reveals the sheer self-centeredness of the grumbler. In his bad temper, the older brother shows that he has had no more real respect for his father than his younger brother had. He lectures the father in front of his guests and refuses his plea to come in. The father is once again generous, this time to the self-righteous older son. It shows that Jesus wants to reason with the Pharisees and the scribes to point out that, though God's generosity is indeed reaching out to people they did not expect, this does not mean there is not any left for them. They are free to choose to stay away, but that does not change God's love for them.
9. The lesson ends with the story of the blind beggar (18:35-43) and Zacchaeus (19:1-10). What is the meaning of the beggar's cry: "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

(18:39)? When the beggar is offered a chance to scale down his request (how tempting it would have been to ask for money or food instead), he goes for the chance of a lifetime and asks for his sight back again. This reveals how completely the blind beggar trusts Jesus, unlike the disciples and the crowd who cannot ponder, imagine or understand that the whole point of the journey to Jerusalem is for the Son of Man to be brutally treated by the pagan and Jewish powers, killed and then raised on the third day.

10. Luke makes Zacchaeus one of his minor heroes. He tells his story (the only gospel to do so!) as a kind of balance to the sad tale of the rich young ruler in the previous chapter and parades him as a demonstration of the kind of healing, the type of new life, that Jesus has come to bring. Jesus is almost in Jerusalem. His mission is to search out and rescue the lost sheep. But that will include suffering and dying there. If we do not see the complete healing that He brings—physical, emotional, moral and spiritual, the complete life transformation—we risk viewing His mission mostly through the medieval lens of forensic substitution and miss the point of the bigger story and purposes of God in all sixty-six books of the Bible.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I've called the cross, the subject for the evening, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence", because I believe that the unique and awful way in which Jesus suffered and died reveals something about our God and about His government that absolutely had to be clarified before trust and peace could be restored again. For as we have considered already, there has been a crisis of distrust in God's universal family, even to the point of war in heaven as described in Revelation 12.

Our God has been accused of being unworthy of the trust of His created beings, of being arbitrary, vengeful, and severe. Particularly has He been accused of lying to His children, of lying about death being the result of sin. It does no good simply to deny such charges. As we have already considered, God does not tempt us to accept mere claims. Even the devil can make mere claims. Only by the demonstration of trustworthiness over a long period of time and under a great variety of circumstances, particularly difficult ones, can trust be re-established and confirmed. And so the Bible records that God sent His Son to deal with this breakdown of trust and trustworthiness in His family. In other words, He sent His Son to deal with sin.

You may recall in the second conversation, we considered the fact that as the Bible describes it; sin is much more than a mere breaking of the rules. Sin is a breakdown of trust or trustworthiness. Sin means a stubborn and suspicious unwillingness to listen, not to mention all the damaging consequences of our being unwilling to listen to our heavenly Father. Jesus came to set right everything that had gone wrong, and to set it right in such a way that it would stay right for the rest of eternity.

So first this evening, let us consider again what has gone wrong, because I believe the way we understand what went wrong helps us to understand the methods God has used to set things right. And particularly then it helps us to understand why Jesus had to die. Our God has been accused, specifically, of being arbitrary, and exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. God sent His Son to reveal the truth about these matters. Why was it not enough for Jesus to come and live among us as He did and tell us the truth about His Father and then demonstrate by His gracious treatment of the worst of sinners that God, indeed, is not the kind of Person His enemies have made Him out to be?

Of course, the way He lived and the way He treated people is vital evidence. And we will spend much time on it later, particularly on the evening entitled “How God Treats His Erring Children”.

But remember that the most serious charge leveled against our God is that God has lied to us. He lied when He said that sin results in death. Worse than that, Satan has turned God’s gracious warning to our first parents in the Garden of Eden into a terrifying threat. He pictures God as saying to Adam and Eve, “Either you obey me, or I’ll kill you!” And think of the baleful effect that perversion of the truth about our God has had on the human race. Think how it has poisoned people’s attitude toward God and their practice of religion. Think of picturing our gracious God as saying, “You either love and obey me, or I’ll torture and execute you in my righteous wrath.” How could this satanic view of God win such wide acceptance as it has? And it is still very widely believed.

For thousands of years, men have sacrificed even their own children to win the favor of their offended gods. Even in the Christian world it is suggested, even believed, that if it were not for Christ’s appeasement sometimes called propitiation, of His Father’s wrath, we would long before now have been destroyed. And were it not for Christ’s constant pleading with the Father, God could not find it in His own heart to forgive and heal His children. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #8, “The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence” recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>

When did the father forgive the prodigal son? Even as he helped him pack his bags to leave. And the greatest discovery the prodigal son made was—half way through his speech of repentance—that his father had long since forgiven him. The message of forgiveness is simply part of the revelation of the truth about God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Ephesians & Colossians*, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/67MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/68MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

When do you think the prodigal son really came to know his father, and the kindness of his father led him to real repentance? Don't you think it's after he discovered he had been forgiven? Which comes first, forgiveness or repentance? In a sense, the forgiveness is offered, and some of us are won by that to repentance. If we're legalists, you have to do it all in the right order, you know, or God can't do it. He's not that kind of a God. He wants us to come home all the time, not willing that any of His children should be lost, but that all should come to repentance. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke*, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: Somewhere here, things went too far? Did God give Satan a chance to repent?

Graham: To repent—now how to answer that? There's no text that says He did. But could you trust God, the God you know; would He for sure give Satan ample time? Has He not always been this way? Isn't God unwilling that any of His children should perish? And so He waits so long for us that some people wonder if He's ever going to come. And remember that Peter discusses this, and Paul. So we have a consistent picture of this all through the Bible, that God would always wait, and wait, and grant us every opportunity to repent. In fact on the authority of the prodigal son story, I would be free to say that had Satan repented, God would have fully reinstated him into his original position. Because when the prodigal came back he said, "If you'll just let me in as a hired servant, I'd be very pleased." And the father said, "We don't have any second class sons in our family. You're either fully home or not." That bothered the older brother. The father even gave him a blank check to go down to the bank, when he gave him that ring. So I would say that the God of the prodigal son story, had Satan repented, would have him back and would have fully reinstated Him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God, #2 with Lou Venden, "What Went Wrong In God's Universe?"* recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

Lou: This person also wanted to ask, "How does God forgive sins, and what is involved in receiving the remission of our sins?"

Graham: Now, remission meaning *forgiveness* and not just suppressing it for a little while like the medical term. What's involved in God forgiving? I believe God is forgiveness personified. And you and your brother Morrie, when you tell the prodigal son story, you make that so clear. That's beautifully done. What had to be done for the father to receive his son back—dirty, and

diseased and malnourished as he was? All the boy had to do was come home and find his father had forgiven him long before. In fact, it's when he found that his father had forgiven him that he repented. It isn't, "If I repent, He'll forgive me." When I find how forgiving He is, that leads me to repentance. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #9 with Lou Venden, "There Is No Need To Be Afraid Of God" recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/9MMCAG>*

Lou: Here's another very important question that has been asked. "In the parable of the prodigal son, the father just forgives. No one has to die. There is no sacrifice or animal that has to be killed, and the Father doesn't have to die. Why couldn't God forgive in that same way His erring children?"

Graham: Well, in a way He does. I think the story was told to say that absolutely nothing had to be done to persuade the father to love his son and to forgive him. I believe the father had forgiven the son long before the son headed for home. But that's not the whole story in the great controversy. God is forgiveness personified, but questions have been raised. God has been accused, and these questions must be answered. Satan's charges must be met. Any misunderstanding as to the consequence of sin, the seriousness of sin, all this must be handled. And that's why more has to be done. But between God and His sinful children, nothing needs to be done to win the Father to our side, to "assuage His wrath before He'll forgive." That's a very sad thing to say. The story of the prodigal son speaks more about the Father than the Son, doesn't it? We call it the story of the prodigal son. It's the story of a father who was so delighted that his son came home, that he didn't even have to finish his speech of repentance. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #13 with Lou Venden, "How God Treats His Erring Children," recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/13MMCAG>*

Do you remember in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus which unfortunately Billy Graham uses as one of his key texts for the immortality of the soul and in his book on angels Billy says, "I know when I die God's good angels will come and take my soul to the bosom of Abraham." He takes the story very literally. Jesus explains that story, there's only one message. The rich man said, "Well, if I cannot be helped at least somebody go and tell my brothers so they won't come to this dreadful place." And Jesus said, "If they won't listen to Moses it wouldn't do any good if somebody rose from the dead." So He again appealed to the authority of the evidence of Scripture. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Understanding the Mission of the

Church, #5, recorded September, 1983, Camp AuSable, Michigan} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/5MMUTMOTC>

Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners—how extraordinary! What a risk to His reputation! And He suffered because of it, didn't He? They said He was a winebibber, and He associated with these immoral people. How are you going to help people if you don't meet them where they are? Which He has always done, and it's very dangerous to do that. That is, harsh critics will misunderstand. But we admire it, don't we. How marvelous that He was willing to go out and eat with these people who were regarded as the dregs of society, even stopping under the tree and saying, "Zacchaeus, I want to have dinner with you today." I love to have Him invited.

Can you imagine, though, the Lord turning up at your front door and saying, "Could I have dinner with you today?" What would you say? Zacchaeus was overcome, wasn't he? He came down out of that tree, and he promised, not just restitution. He said, "I will give four times as much." He was really overwhelmed. He never got over it. And that was a very wonderful occasion. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Mark, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Recommended Listening:

Conversations About God #8 "The Most Costly And Convincing Evidence" is available at: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>

Recommended further study: The complete article (interview) written for The Exchange in 1999 [Why Did Jesus Have to Die \(PDF\)](#)

Further Study with Ellen White

The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. You are not able, of yourself, to bring your purposes and desires and inclinations into submission to the will of God; but if you are "willing to be made willing," God will accomplish the work for you, even "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the

knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5. Then you will “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Philippians 2:12, 13. {MB 142.1}

Heaven’s plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, “that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” Psalm 78:7. {PK 377.1}

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {ST, December 22, 1914 par. 4}

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, veiling His glory and humbling Himself, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed in unfolding its record of His own condescending grace. In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God.—Letter 83, 1895. {21MR 393.1}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286.4}

The souls who came to Jesus felt in His presence that even for them there was escape from the pit of sin. The Pharisees had only scorn and condemnation for them; but Christ greeted them as children of God, estranged indeed from the Father’s house, but not forgotten by the Father’s heart. And their very misery and sin made them only the more the objects of His compassion. The farther they had wandered from Him, the more earnest the longing and the greater the sacrifice for their rescue. {COL 186.2}

In the parable the shepherd goes out to search for one sheep—the very least that can be numbered. So if there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one. {COL 187.2}

The sheep that has strayed from the fold is the most helpless of all creatures. It must be sought for by the shepherd, for it cannot find its way back. So with the soul that has wandered away

from God; he is as helpless as the lost sheep, and unless divine love had come to his rescue he could never find his way to God. {COL 187.3}

The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, bring out in distinct lines God's pitying love for those who are straying from Him. Although they have turned away from God, He does not leave them in their misery. He is full of kindness and tender pity toward all who are exposed to the temptations of the artful foe. {COL 198.1}

A golden chain, the mercy and compassion of divine love, is passed around every imperiled soul. The Lord declares, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. {COL 202.1}

In his restless youth the prodigal looked upon his father as stern and severe. How different his conception of him now! So those who are deceived by Satan look upon God as hard and exacting. They regard Him as watching to denounce and condemn, as unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there is a legal excuse for not helping him. His law they regard as a restriction upon men's happiness, a burdensome yoke from which they are glad to escape. But he whose eyes have been opened by the love of Christ will behold God as full of compassion. He does not appear as a tyrannical, relentless being, but as a father longing to embrace his repenting son. The sinner will exclaim with the Psalmist, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Psalm 103:13. {COL 204.2}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

I saw that the angels of God are never to control the will. God sets before man life and death. He can have his choice. {EW 221.1}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not desire to be set free, if we will not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7, 8. {SC 34.2}

"Come now, and let us reason together" is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real

development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. {SC 43.4}

Recommended Reading: "God Made Manifest in Christ" – *Signs of the Times* January 20, 1890
<https://egwwritings.org/>