

Monday
Luke 15

One day Jesus heard the Pharisees and the teachers of the law complaining about how he was friendly toward sinners and even ate with them. The Pharisees kept such people away and they thought Jesus should too. So Jesus told three stories, called parables, to help explain his love for all people.

In the first parable, a man with 100 sheep lost one. He left the 99 other sheep to go look for the one that was lost. When he finally found it, he rejoiced with his friends and neighbors. Likewise, Jesus said that there would be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who think they do not need to repent.

In the second parable, a woman lost one of her 10 silver coins. She swept the house until she found it – and when she did, she called her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her. In the same way, Jesus said there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents.

The third parable was about a man who had two sons. The younger son asked his father for his share of the inheritance of his father's money. This was an outrageous request! Sons did not receive their inheritance until after their Father was dead. By asking for the money now, it was as if the son wished his father was dead. This made the father very sad, but he gave his son what he asked for.

Soon, the son left home for a faraway country. There, he foolishly spent all his money until it was gone. Then a famine came, and food became scarce. The son had no money left to buy food, so he got a job feeding pigs. When he found himself dreaming about eating the pig's food, he came to his senses. He knew that his father's servants had plenty to eat, so he decided to go home and tell his father that he had sinned. He was even willing to become one of his father's hired servants and work for him in order to earn some food.

While the son was still a long way off, the father saw him and ran to hug him. The son began to tell his father about the bad things he had done, but the father was filled with joy. He asked the servants to bring his son gifts – the best robe, a special family ring, and new shoes. Rather than treating him like a servant, the father treated him like a son. The father also asked the servants to prepare a feast for a celebration.

The father's older son was angry. He had stayed home and worked for his father all this time, and his father hadn't given him a party. "Son," the father said, "everything I have is yours. We have to celebrate and be glad, for this brother of yours was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found!"

We, too, are lost in our sin apart from Jesus, but Jesus came to seek us and save us. He also wants us to seek to save the lost, just as we would seek to find and save a lost sheep, or money, and as we should seek to save a lost brother. Through faith in Jesus, he brings us back home and forgives us.

- **Why were the Pharisees and teachers of the law upset with Jesus?**
- **In the story of the father and his two sons, one obeys the father and the other one does not. The father in the story represents God. Which of his sons does the father love more?**

Tuesday
Luke 16:19–31

Jesus once told a story about a rich man who lived in luxury, dressed in fancy clothes, who enjoyed good food and the best of everything every day. Jesus also told about a poor man named Lazarus who was full of sores and laid at the rich man's gate. Dogs came and licked Lazarus' sores. Lazarus would gladly have eaten even the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

Jesus said that when Lazarus died, the angels carried him to heaven to the company of Abraham. (Jesus was telling this story to Jewish people, and Abraham is a big deal to Jewish people.) When the rich man died, the angels did not carry him to heaven. In hell, the rich man looked up in pain and suffering and saw Lazarus the poor beggar resting happily in heaven with Abraham. The rich man cried, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in this flame."

Abraham replied, "Son, in your earthly life, you enjoyed many good things but Lazarus knew only trouble and suffering. But now he knows comfort, and you are tormented. Plus, between us and you is a great divide. We cannot cross over to you, and you cannot cross over to us."

Then the rich man said, "Please, Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my family; I have five brothers. Let Lazarus warn them so that they don't have to come to this terrible place."

Abraham answered, "They have God's Word. It has the message of repentance and salvation."

"No, Father Abraham, if someone comes to them from the dead, they will certainly repent."

But Abraham replied, "If they do not listen to God's Word, then they won't be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

God's Word is the only miracle we need to be convinced of God's love and truth.

- **When we die, or on the last day, those who trust in Jesus will go to heaven, but unbelievers will go to hell. In what ways can you help unbelievers to know and trust Jesus?**

Thank you, Jesus, that you call me by name. I am so blessed. Please use me to bring others to believe in you so that more people will go to haven when they die. Amen.

Wednesday

Matthew 22:34–39; Luke 10:25–37

Many years after God gave the Ten Commandments to his people, God sent his Son to earn forgiveness for every commandment we break because of our sinfulness and also to keep every commandment perfectly in our place.

Once, a man asked Jesus which of the commandments was the greatest. Jesus gave an excellent answer to the man's question. He summarized both parts of the Ten Commandments. He said the greatest commandment is to love God with all you are and have, and to love your neighbor as yourself. The commandments are all about love.

Jesus told a story about love. In the story, a man was attacked by robbers. The robbers left the man beaten, wounded and almost dead. After two travelers passed by without stopping to help, a man who was from an enemy country saw the wounded man and helped him. He showed the man the kind of love Jesus showed to each of us when he lived and died in our place to save us.

- **Talk about the ways you can show love to either God or another person.**

Dear Jesus, thank you for being a perfect example of love and my Savior. Help me to follow you. Amen.

Thursday
Luke 18:9–14

We may think that God has saved us because of how good we are. But God tells us in his Word that we are all sinners. And we are saved because of Jesus. Jesus obeyed God in our place. Then he took our punishment and died on the cross to take our sins away.

Jesus once told a story to teach us about the danger of thinking we are good. Jesus told of two men who went into the temple to pray. One of the men was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee stood in front of everyone else in order to draw attention to himself, and he prayed, "God, I thank you that I am better than other people who steal, or cheat, and do other bad things, and I'm certainly better than people like this tax collector over here."

But the tax collector stood in a place where he tried to not even be noticed. He bowed his head humbly and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Jesus commented that the tax collector's way was the right way. He prayed knowing he needed God and his mercy and love.

We cannot save ourselves. No one can. Instead, we need the gifts of forgiveness, new life, and a home in heaven that God offers us freely in Jesus.

- **Do you know people who think they're better than others? What can you tell them or show them?**

Lord God, I love you so much. I pray that you will help me grow every day and become more like you.

Forgive me for trusting in myself and in how good I sometimes think I am. Teach me to rely more and more on you and your goodness. Make me strong in what I believe and comfort me with your love. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Friday

Luke 15:11–24

When we confess our sins to God, he forgives us for Jesus' sake. When Jesus forgives us, it's as if we are at the beginning of a new day. We can feel happy knowing Jesus will help us face all that will happen in the new day ahead.

Jesus once told a story to show people what God's forgiveness is like. Jesus told of a man who had two sons. The younger son asked his dad for his inheritance so that he could go out on his own. The father gave the son what he had asked for, and the son set out and went to live in a foreign land. There, he spent all of his money on wild living. He made friends in this new place, but they were not good friends. They were interested only in the young man's money. They were not true friends. They influenced him to do bad things.

When his money was gone, the young man had no place to go and no way to make a living. Finally, a farmer hired him to take care of his pigs. As the young man cared for the pigs, he was so hungry that even the food the pigs were eating looked good to him. Then he remembered how well his father's servants lived. They always had plenty to eat. The young man decided that he would go back to his father. Knowing he was no longer worthy to be treated as his father's son, he would ask his father if he could work for him as a servant.

When the son was still a long way off, the father recognized his returning son and ran to meet him. The father dressed the returning son in a royal robe and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. The father not only treated the young man as his son, but he also gave him a party. The father wanted to celebrate. For him, it was as if his son was dead but was now alive, was lost but now was found. For the son, as for each of us who receives Jesus' forgiveness, a new day had begun.

- **Lamentations 3:22-23 reminds us “the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.” What do these words mean to you?**

Dear Father in heaven, let me always remember to honor you. Thank you for all you have given me, especially my Savior, Jesus. Help me to begin each day talking with you and remembering all you have done for me. Forgive my sins, and help me to live for you each new day. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.