

September 15, 2019
Rejoice with Me



Adult Resource
Sheet 1

Focus on Luke 15:1–10

Semicontinuous
Jer. 4:11–12, 22–28
Ps. 14
Complementary
Exod. 32:7–14 Ps.
51:1–10
1 Tim. 1:12–17
Luke 15:1–10

WHAT is important to know? —From “*Exegetical Perspective*” by Charles B. Cousar The themes of joy

will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (vv. 7, 10). Neither a sheep nor a coin can repent. The issue of the two parables, therefore, is not to call sinners to repentance, but to invite the righteous to join the celebration. There is no joy or celebration, no partying or delight, among the Pharisees and scribes. Even though invited to the reception given in behalf of the joyous shepherd/woman, they cannot bring themselves to come; thereby, like the elder brother (15:25–32), they are exposed.

WHERE is God in these words? —From “*Theological Perspective*” by Scott Bader-Saye If for the sinners and tax collectors, doubters and skeptics, these parables are about being found, for the Pharisees and scribes they are stories about learning to rejoice. The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin both end by calling together friends and neighbors to join in the celebration. Indeed, the movement of joy pulses outward from the one to the many, from the earth to the heavens. The party takes on a cosmic scale. Rejoicing itself seems to be the *telos* of these stories, the goal toward which they move beyond the penultimate moment of finding. So salvation consists not purely or even primarily in rescue, but in being drawn into the eternal celebration.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “*Pastoral Perspective*” by Helen
Montgomery DeBevoise

These parables call the community to open its doors and rejoice. This call is repeated again and again. Sinners and tax collectors gather at the table with the Christ? Rejoice! Laugh! Be glad! They have returned home and now sit in the presence of God. The sheep who wandered off from the rest of the flock, lost in the thicket, is now safe and sound! Hallelujah! Worry no more! The coin that fell through the cracks was easily forgotten but is blessedly retrieved. We can feast! Hope is restored!

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do? —From “*Homiletical Perspective*” by G. Penny
Nixon

Who are the sinners? The turn of the phrase at the end of the parables provides a final twist. The sinners in this story are the ones who need repentance, the ones who need their minds changed. God rejoices when the religious insiders (in all of us) change their minds about who is in and who is out. The rejoicing happens when community is complete and there is no such category as the *one* and the *ninety-nine*. True repentance happens when our minds are changed to such a degree that we cannot see a community as whole until all are included and none are “lost.”

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Sheet 2

Heaven's Celebration

Semicontinuous
Jer. 4:11–12, 22–28
Ps. 14
Complementary
Exod. 32:7–14 Ps.
51:1–10
1 Tim. 1:12–17
Luke 15:1–10

Jesus shared with the Pharisees and scribes a common attitude

toward the tax collectors and sinners, namely, that the tax collectors and sinners were lost. However, these parables point out a sharp difference between Jesus, on the one hand, and the Pharisees and scribes, on the other, with regard to God's searching out and finding the lost. The point of the stories is twofold, emphasizing the compassionate concern of a searching God (note the frequent use of the word "lost" in these two parables) and heaven's glad delight over discovery, when one sinner, either tax collector or Pharisee, comes to faith.

"Whether one will join the celebration is all-important, because it reveals whether one's relationships are based on merit or on mercy. Those who find God's mercy offensive cannot celebrate with the angels when a sinner repents. Thus they exclude themselves from God's grace."¹ The Pharisees and the scribes put themselves outside the circle of divine grace by the way in which they grumble at Jesus' fellowship with tax collectors and sinners.

Excerpted from Charles B. Cousar, *Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 4* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 73.



1. R. Alan Culpepper, "Luke," in Leander Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 9:298.