

Recovering the Lost Coin

Scripture: Luke 15:8-10

Code: 42-199

We now turn again to the teaching of the Word of God and the 15th chapter of the gospel of Luke...Luke, chapter 15. We're looking this morning at verses 8 through 10, the second of three parables that our Lord taught that are recorded for us in this chapter. I'm going to read verses 8 through 10 and then we'll look into it.

Luke 15, verse 8, Jesus speaking says, "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? And 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.' In the same way I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

In our study of this chapter we are considering the subject of Heaven's joy. This chapter is all about Heaven's joy or, if you will, God's joy, the joy of recovering the lost. Scripture says that when Christians arrive in Heaven, they enter into the joy of their Lord. I don't know what you think when you think about Heaven. You probably have a lot of thoughts. You probably think of tranquility. You probably think of a peace, holiness, righteousness, purity, shining, blazing glory of God, magnificent, indescribably beautiful surroundings, wonderful fellowship. All of that is true. You think of worship. You think of singing, music, people busy serving the Lord in ways that we can't even comprehend. But, really, the ultimate and pervasive character of Heaven is summed up in the word joy. It's really a place of joy. Joy is the outcome of fulfillment. I mean, basically, whatever you do in your life, whatever you pursue, whatever you're after, whatever you accomplish is intended to bring you a level of fulfillment, satisfaction, achievement, accomplishment, acceptance, notoriety that produces in you a sense of well-being, a sense of happiness, delight, exuberance, exhilaration...joy. We work very hard to produce an environment, a life that we enjoy. Well, Heaven is consummate, complete, permanent, eternal, unending, undiminished joy because everything is as it should be. We are fulfilled on every front in every duty, in every attitude, in every possession, in every relationship. Everything in Heaven produces complete satisfaction, fulfillment, completion and, therefore, produces perfect joy. That is why Romans 14:17 says, "the kingdom of God is...righteousness, peace and joy..."...and joy. The perfection of Heaven and the eternal presence of God provides, in fact, the Bible says a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." That is a joy that can't be described or defined. We experience a measure of that joy here and now...the joy of knowing that our sins are forgiven, the joy of knowing that our future in Heaven is secure, the joy of anticipating seeing Christ face to face, the joy of anticipating reunion with believers who have gone before, the joy that comes to us now when we

anticipate that we will live forever in a place where sin does not exist, the joy of complete fulfillment by anticipation. But even now, we know the joy of God's forgiveness, the joy of grace, the joy of God's blessing and guidance and direction, the joy that comes to our heart from the knowledge of the truth. "These are written that you might have joy and that your joy may be full." So, already, we live with a measure of joy. In fact, wherever our joy is not what it should be, we are commanded to "rejoice...always, and again I...say, rejoice." But one of the components and one of the elements of joy in Heaven comes from the salvation of sinners and that is what these parables are about. They're about joy in Heaven or, better, they're about God's joy, the joy of God. And I will tell you this, that ultimately, God seeks His own joy. God seeks His own glory and God seeks His own satisfaction and righteously so. And God seeks His own fulfillment and His own purpose and all His own ends. And God has a right to do that so that in the end, He finds full satisfaction and consummate joy. God finds joy in Himself while we find our joy in Him. And so God has a compelling interest in His own joy. And what contributes to His joy by His own statement is the salvation of every sinner. In fact, Jesus, who is God, the Son, said that He came and went to the cross and endured the suffering of the cross for "the joy that was set before Him." And even the Holy Spirit experiences and desires joy, for it is the joy in the Holy Spirit that marks those in the kingdom and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy. The joy of God is what this chapter is about. The reason that God redeems sinners is for His own joy. The reason that Jesus Christ came into the world to associate with sinners, to seek and to save the lost, was for His own eternal joy. It is this very issue that causes Jesus to be in conflict with the religious leaders of Israel. Because Jesus came down for the joy of God and His joy and the joy of the Holy Spirit to redeem sinners. And so He associated with them. He associated with those who knew they were sinful. He associated with even the self-righteous who didn't know they were sinners, but they never took advantage of that immense, unequal opportunity to be in His presence...too self-righteous to ever receive from Him what He offered, had they truly understood their wretchedness and their sinfulness. But Jesus spent His time with those who were drawn to Him, those who knew they were sinful, those who were meek and mourning and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, those who were destitute spiritually, those who were tortured souls. And this put Him in conflict with the Pharisees and the scribes. The Pharisees and the scribes were the self-styled, self-righteous, self-appointed spiritual leaders of Israel. And one thing characterized them, was an illusion or an image of purity. And it caused them to be unwilling to touch or get near anybody who was, in their view, unclean. And that certainly meant the riff-raff, the sinners, the tax collectors and everybody else who was below the line of their standard. They basically associated only with themselves and kept everybody else at a distance. But particularly, sinners and tax collectors who were the lowest of the low, they would have absolutely nothing to do with. And so relentlessly and continuously, they confronted Jesus over His association with sinners. Back in Matthew 9, verse 11, the Pharisees saw Jesus reclining at a table with tax gatherers and sinners and they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" And this went on again and again and again. They were, basically, outraged by that kind of association. In Matthew, chapter 11 and verse 19, Jesus said, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they" said...meaning the Pharisees and

the scribes..."Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax gatherers and sinners." And indeed He was. But for them, that was a way to vindicate their accusation that He was from Satan, not God, because in their view, God wouldn't associate with those people. That's how far they were from God. They didn't know that the heart of God was to rescue sinners, to come all the way down and get close enough to them to embrace them and pick them up in their hopelessness and bring them into His own presence. They thought that to be like God meant you didn't associate with those people, when the truth of the matter is that God, in human flesh, came into the world and those are the very people He did associate with for the purposes of redemption to bring joy to the Trinity. The Pharisees and the scribes separated themselves from everybody that they thought would in any way pollute them or corrupt or stain them or defile them or intrude on their purity and their holiness. And Jesus regularly associated with the very people that they shunned. And they decided that that was proof that He was not from God because they were, they knew the true message of God, they knew the true religion, they were the architects of that true religion. This Jesus who kept saying He was from God, was God, made Himself equal with God, in their view, because of His associations, was in fact, from Satan and that's why He felt so comfortable with Satan's people. No, they knew nothing about God. They were as far away from God as you can be. On the other hand, Jesus, as God, knew the joy of God was in the recovery of the lost and so He came seeking to save sinners for His own joy and the joy of His Father and the joy of the Spirit. In fact, His evangelism, as well as all evangelism, then and now, is grounded in the joy of God. Why is there a redemptive plan? Why does God provide salvation? Why does God forgive sin? Why does God rescue sinners? Because it brings Him glory. It puts glory to Him in the view of all men and angels for His grace and His mercy and His forgiveness and His compassion and kindness. And that brings Him joy. And He finds joy even in the sinner who is restored and recovered and turned into a true worshipper of Him. Our Lord associated with sinners, but He didn't sin. He was without sin. He was sinless. But He received sinners with love and grace when they came meek and mourning and humble and seeking salvation for their tormented hearts. He opened the door of His eternal kingdom of salvation and He brought them in. And He told them that He was gonna go to Heaven and prepare a room for them in the house of the eternal holy God. Staggering thought. And why did God want all these sinners living in His heavenly house? Because it brought Him joy. That's the theme of the chapter.

Now, as we come to chapter 15, Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He's been moving that direction since chapter 9, verse 51. He is headed toward Jerusalem very soon. And there the hurricane of hatred will hit Him with its full force. Its winds are increasing in intensity. They are being propelled by the breath of the Pharisees and scribes whose hostility continues to increase. And their hostility is collecting hostility among the people they're influencing. In this text, that hostility again surfaces and it's in verses 1 and 2. All the tax gatherers and the sinners were coming near to listen to Him. And "both the Pharisees and the scribes began to murmur"...or grumble..."saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" That was an outrage to them. As the self-appointed righteous of Israel, they were the final court on everybody. They were the self-appointed judges of everybody. They rendered all the verdicts. It was Jesus condemning them when He said, "judge not." Who made you

the judge? But they were the self-appointed judges of everyone including Jesus. And their judgment was Jesus was doing what no person who represents God would ever do... hanging around the unrighteous, the wicked. Their regular criticism was always associated with the fact that He is spending His time with the unscrupulous and despised collaborators with Rome who bought tax franchises and extorted money out of the Jewish people, therefore, traitors to their people and their religion and their God, in their view. They were equally, if not more outraged that He ate with sinners. Sinners was a word used 13 times by Luke, always with the same meaning. It means moral lawbreakers, adulterers, prostitutes, the scum, the riff-raff. For them, Jesus' association with these kind of people was all they needed to convince everybody else that He was not of God. And the language in verse 2 is interesting. "This man receives sinners," they said. Not dechomai, the simple word, to receive, but prosdechomai, which is the kind of reception that's intensified that you would have for somebody who's a member of your family. In fact, it's that very word that Paul uses in Romans 16:1, 2, "I commend to you our sister, Phoebe...a servant of the church...at Cenchrea...receive her in the Lord..." Embrace her as a sister in Christ. Jesus doesn't just allow them around; He embraces them. He puts His arms around them. He pulls them in like they were family. Ahhh, this is proof-positive whose family He belongs to. Then He eats with them. And this is most outrageous because in the ancient Near East and Middle East, eating with somebody was a sign of approval and affirmation, particularly if you were a rabbi or a Pharisee or a spiritual leader. The rabbis used to say they ate with people and whenever they ate with anybody, they conveyed to that person, affirmation and spiritual blessing. So Jesus eating with sinners was a way to give approval to them in their view. And so here they are again making the same chronic complaint against Jesus completely misunderstanding the heart of God for sinners. And Jesus answers their murmurings with three stories. The first two are prologue and the main story starts in verse 11, the one that we know as the prodigal son, the longest parable Jesus ever taught and really full and rich as we will see. But He opens up His response to them with a little prologue from verses 4 to 10 in which He tells two simple stories.

Now, you have to keep in mind that the main target of this entire chapter is these Pharisees and scribes who are complaining against Him and criticizing Him. They are the target. He is going to expose them. Now, they don't appear in the first and the second story but they do in the third. In the first and second story, Jesus tells a story or a parable in the form of a question and pulls them into it. They have to think like a shepherd and think like a woman and, therefore, they're implicated in the story without actually being a character in the story. But when it comes to the third and the main parable, the one that occupies the bulk of the chapter, now it's not just implicating them in the story, they're in the story. In fact, the Pharisees and the scribes appear in the third story as the older brother, the self-righteous, smug older brother who is miserably unhappy, envious and jealous over the father's celebration of his son who has been restored. So they are implied in the first two and explicitly identified in the character of the older son in the third story. In all three stories, however, they are exposed as having no concept of the heart of God. They are really the ones on Satan's side because they have no interest in the joy of God. They have no interest in the enterprise that brings a

celebration to Heaven. They have nothing to do with what's going on in Heaven.

Now, you remember the first story, verses 4 to 7, about a shepherd who had 100 sheep and lost one of them. What would you do, He asks the Pharisees and scribes if you were that shepherd and you had 100 and you lost one? You left the 99 in the open pasture and you go after the one. And they would all affirm that's right. That's what you would have to do. Says he found it, laid it on his shoulders, brought it back, called his friends, called his neighbors, said rejoice with me, I've found my sheep, which was lost. They would affirm that that was the right thing to do. And then in verse 7 the Lord makes the application, "I tell you...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." See how far you are from Heaven? You're the 99 self-righteous...righteous in a sarcastic way...who need no repentance. You give Heaven no joy. Heaven's joy is found in that one sinner who repents. How far from Heaven they really are. They knew what a shepherd would do. He would go find a lost sheep because He had a duty to do it, he had a responsibility to do it and because the sheep had value. They would affirm that's the ethical, dutiful thing to do. What superficiality they exhibit, what hypocrisy. They understood finding a sheep. They would even understand finding a coin. They could understand the celebration, but they had no interest in finding a lost soul with infinitely more value. In fact, they were such worthless shepherds, that they abused the sheep. They took their money, they took their homage and they left them to perish. Matthew 23 says they wouldn't lift a finger to help them bear the burden of the laws they imposed upon them. They found some delight in the people being crushed by the weight of their prescriptions and yet, keeping their distance from them. They were abusers of the people. And this isn't the first time. Jeremiah talks about the shepherds who abused and slaughtered and killed their people. Ezekiel talks about the shepherds who ate the fat, slaughtered the sheep. Jesus talks about those who are dressed as shepherds but really are...what?...are wolves devouring the sheep. Now, this is always the character of false religious leaders. It was the character of these and of any others then and now from the false prophets of old to the modern frauds, from the protestant charlatans to the Roman Catholic priests who abused people every way possible, from the fake healers who take people's money with the false promises of healing to the pedophiles and everything in between and all the cultists and all the rest that abuse people in the name of God. Nothing is new about this. The heart of God reaches out to sinners in love and compassion and grace and mercy to save them. False teachers keep their distance. They use and abuse for their own profit and gain.

Continuing to confront them, our Lord tells the second story about this woman who lost a coin. And the setting, again, is village life. Can I just take you back? You're in a little Middle Eastern village in the land of Israel, a little dirt road. And along the little dirt road in a small little village there's some little earth brick houses made out of bricks with mud and straw and the little houses are along the road and the little road down the middle. That was the little village. They would know this very, very well. The picture is of a simple people, a poor people who face a serious matter in the story. This woman has a big problem. She loses something of great value. They didn't have a lot of money. In fact, they

didn't use money the way we use money today. They lived in a bartering society as many people have throughout history and some even do today. They swapped this or that for what they needed, even their own service and their own labor. And so money was not distributed and dispensed at the pace that it is for us. And a little bit of money, relatively, could go a long way. And this woman, this village woman in the story has 10 silver coins and she loses one and she finds it and has a party. Now, you might say, village life must be relatively dull (laughter). This seems to me like a party for no reason at all. And you might conclude, hey, if there's any reason to have a party, let's have a party. Life is dull. I think it probably was. But I wanted to take you into the story and I want to kind of put you into the position of those Pharisees who were hearing the story so let's begin at the beginning.

Verse 8...I love how He starts. You remember in verse 4, He said, "What man among you, if he has 100 sheep..."...and they would have all gone _____, because a shepherd was unclean. Shepherds were defiled. They wouldn't have anything to do with a shepherd. They wouldn't be a shepherd. They wouldn't go near a shepherd. And yet Jesus said what one of you, in effect, if he were a shepherd, and He had caused them, in their minds, to have to conceive of themselves as a shepherd and, thus, they had been defiled. Jesus loved to assault their foolish pride. And this, if anything, is worse. Now He makes them act in their minds as if they are not a shepherd but a...a woman (laughter). Oh, horror of all horrors (laughter). He says to them, "Or what woman"...yikes! This would be viewed as an absolute, outright insult to address Pharisees and scribes and ask them to put themselves in a woman's place to evaluate how a woman would think and how she would behave. Shepherds were unclean and women were un-respected. In fact, in the Middle Eastern culture, it was an insult to compare a male audience to a woman. Here again, Jesus just sweeps away their foolish pride. [He] does it mercifully since God only gives grace to the humble, and sooner or later they're gonna have to be humbled if they're ever gonna come into His kingdom. And by the way, while the Pharisees didn't want to be compared to a woman, for sure, God doesn't mind being compared to a woman. We think of God in male terms and, of course, that's the way He presents Himself, as a Father, the masculine identity, the masculine pronoun. But there are many times in the Word of God when God presents Himself as analogous to a woman. And I'll give you one that just combines both of them. Listen to Psalm 23. "The Lord is my Shepherd." Well, we understand that. That's a male kind of analogy. But this Psalm also says, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Can I tell you something about ancient culture? The men didn't set the table and fix the meal. In Psalm 23, God is both the Shepherd who leads His sheep and God is the woman who prepares the meal. It shouldn't surprise us that in the 13th chapter of Luke and the 34th verse, Jesus speaking as God says, "How often I wanted to gather your children together like a hen gathers her brood..." That's a picture of a mother hen. That's a picture of a mother hen picturing a mother picturing Jesus. I wanted to gather you like a mother gathers her children. And there are numerous other occasions in Scripture where God is represented as analogous to the conduct, the behavior of a woman. But women, in this period of time, in the time that Jesus was on the earth from about 200 B.C. to 200 A.D., 400 years in there, weren't even taught the law of God. That's how much disdain there was for women. The Pharisees led that parade. They got up every day and several times said I

thank you, O God, that I'm not a woman. They wouldn't be a shepherd and they certainly wouldn't be a woman. So Jesus said to them, What if you were a shepherd and what if you were a woman? What would you do? And He pushes them into the mental place to have to think like a shepherd and think like a woman and, thus, they are intellectually being defiled. They would be outraged by this but they couldn't avoid it. Jesus distressed and disturbed their prejudices greatly.

Now, let's look at the story. Four little points: lost, sought, found, celebrated. Just like the one about the shepherd. We'll see the story, the ethics, the theology and the Christology. Verse 8, "What woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin"...we'll stop right there. Picture your little village, okay. A dusty road somewhere in Judea, Israel, a little village, a little home with four walls, a little low doorway, no windows, maybe a slit above eye level to let the smoke out from the fire inside and maybe cause a little ventilation, floors made out of dirt in some parts of Israel, black bay salt dirt and the floor is hard and yet dusty on the surface. There are cracks, there's dust, there's debris. This woman is in this little house and she's lost one of her ten silver coins. These silver coins would be about 4.3 grams of silver. The Greeks called them a drachma and the Romans called them a denarius and they would be a day's wage. But in the case of these women, while it is possible that this could just be a sum of money that she had, like, cash for family needs over the next months or weeks, they didn't spend their money at as rapid a rate as we would. Even though it was a day's wages, it wouldn't necessarily need to spend it every day. So this would be some money that they could use down the road. And in ancient times women would take the coins that they would have in their, sort of, cash accounts and they would wrap them in some kind of a rag and tie a knot. That was kind of the original purse thing. The money would be in there and it would all be knotted up and tied for safekeeping and the woman would put it in a safe place. But there's another possibility here that maybe is more likely. It could be her dowry. Women were given a dowry by their fathers. On occasion their husband would even give them a dowry, which would act as a security for their future. And some of those women would put those around their neck in a necklace. They would run a cord through coins that were pierced or they would put a bag with those coins in them and they would have it tied tightly to this thing they would wear around their neck so they always had their security in their presence. And this would be their future. What happens if their husband dies, if their husband is ill, if there's a disaster in the family? This is their security. Well, it could have been any of these things. But whatever it is, in a poor village family, this amount is significant. And one-tenth of this amount is significant, too. There's not only the duty of being responsible, but this has real value. Another place that women often did this was they placed their coins that they saw as their security or their dowry in their hair. And they had ways to tie the coins together and weave them into their hair. A woman knew she was responsible, she knew this was a great loss and there was really no option. And so He asked the question that is gonna demand a right answer. What woman...if you were this woman and you lost one of those coins, what would you do? They would know that she had only one choice. You wouldn't say, ah, it doesn't matter. This is a poor family. Of course it matters. And so you go from lost to sought in verse 8. She loses one coin, she lights the lamp, sweeps the house, searches carefully until she finds it. It's got value plus, you know, women are really special about this kind of stuff, aren't they.

I mean, some of us men, I know at home I say, ah, you know, forget it. Patricia is in the barrel, under the bed (laughter), everywhere, in the closet, overturning...what are you looking for? I don't know. It's this or that. Where is this...where?... I don't know. Women attach sentimental value to things. Well, this is more than sentimental value. This matters. So the diligent search goes on. The lamp is lit. A little clay lamp with oil in it, drop a little wick, float the wick, light the wick and going around trying to find it and maybe it's hanging from some chains and looking into every nook and cranny and every corner. She gets out her little twig broom that maybe she made or bartered from a neighbor. She starts sweeping because even on a hard floor of dirt, there's dust on the top. It's a very dry place. And she's sweeping it all over trying to find it. Maybe it's in a crack. Maybe it's under the dirt. Maybe it's under debris. Maybe it's under something there, a furnishing of some kind. And it says she searches carefully, epimelos means to have an urgent sense of care. She reaches with her little broom every corner of the house, moves everything, lifts up anything it might have rolled under, looks in every crack by her light. And she keeps doing it until...we come to the third point...it's found, end of verse 8, until she finds it. Verse 9, and "When she has found it..." She's gonna do this until she finds it. Why? It's precious. It belongs to her. It's lost. It needs to be recovered. It's the same as the shepherd back in 4, verse 4. He goes after the one which is lost...the end of the verse...until he finds it. And "when he has found it," said the same two statements down in verse 8 and 9, "until she finds it," and "when she has found it." Whatever it takes. And Jesus' audience, absolutely they understand this. Perfectly clear.

And that takes us to the fact that the coin is lost and sought and found and celebrated, verse 9. And "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.'" Let's have a party. Friends and neighbors, by the way, different than back in verse 7...or verse 6 where the shepherd calls his friends and neighbors. Here, the word friend, philos, and the word neighbor, geitonos, are both in the feminine. She calls her lady friends. She calls her lady friends. That was pretty typical. Men stayed with men in that culture and women with women. They were very close in the little village. They all knew each other. Everybody's suffering would be everybody's suffering and everybody's joy would be everybody's joy. And so she calls her lady friends together and they have this wonderful little party because she has found what she lost. And the point to the Pharisees is, you understand that, right. This is perfectly clear. Of course they would buy into the story. They would buy into the ethical response of the woman. She did exactly what she should have done. It's what I would have done if I were a woman...horror of horrors.

And then comes the application in verse 10. "In the same way"...this is where the finger comes out..."I tell you"...emphatic..."there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." In a similar sense, just like that woman, as she called her friends to rejoice over recovering a lost coin, I tell you, Pharisees, I tell you, and He points right at them, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." They're just so far from that. Here, Jesus is saying, I'm doing this because this is what brings joy to God. He gets no joy out of you 99 self-righteous people. His joy is in the recovery of a repenting sinner, the people you don't associate with. Now, look at that

phrase, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God," because it's an interesting one. You might assume immediately that this is the angels rejoicing. It doesn't say that. It says there is joy...and this is an accurate translation...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. Where the angels are, there is joy and the angels are there in the presence of God. So there is joy there in the presence of the angels where God is. The joy, however, is coming, first of all from...whom?...from God. He is the one in view in verse 7 when it says "joy in Heaven." It's the joy of God that fills Heaven. It's the joy of God that surrounds the angels. He is the one who fills Heaven with His joy. Oh, of course, they share His joy and, of course, they join into His joy. In fact, in Revelation, chapter 4...it's probably good to look at it just briefly again...in Revelation 4 you get a glimpse of Heaven. This is really the best look at what's going on in Heaven and it's a big celebration. In Revelation, chapter 4 you have the throne of God, verses 1 and 2. God's on the throne in all His splendor and His glory. He's surrounded by angels. He's surrounded by 24 elders representing the redeemed. And they're all surrounding God. And they're all, in verse 8, saying "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and...is and...is to come." And they're all saying, "Worthy, art Thou," verse 11, "our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor...for You did create all things and because of Your will they existed and were created." And there's a whole lot of praise going on because God has created. But then when you come into chapter 5 the praise takes a little different turn. We find those around the throne, the angels and the redeemed in verse 9 singing a new song, "Worthy art Thou to take the book and...break its seals for Thou wast slain and did purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Now, they're praising God and the Lamb for redemption. And then verse 11, "the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures"...special angels..."and the elders"...the redeemed..."and the number" is "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," innumerable. And they're all saying "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" and so forth. Everybody's praising. Everybody's worshipping. That's just the joy of Heaven. And everybody is celebrating not only the God of creation but the God of redemption. Everybody is participating in the joy of God. But the source of this joy is God. And the angels just echo the joy of God. The angels don't personally experience salvation. Fallen angels fell and are not redeemed. Holy angels never fell and, therefore, need no redemption. They have no experience of redemption but they enter into the joy of God. And the saints, the redeemed, enter into the joy of God as those who've experienced redemption. And by the way, just in a general sense, angels have a great interest in the things that occupy the heart of God. They love God perfectly. They serve God perfectly. They enter into God's purposes. They enter into God's joy. That's why in Matthew 18:10 it says, Don't despise or belittle any believer because "their angels in Heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in Heaven." The angels, the holy angels, watch the face of the Father and when the Father's face picks up concern over how one of His children is being treated, they're ready to be dispatched to the aid of that child as those who minister to those who are God's. They are concerned about what concerns God. They pick up His concern off His face. They pick up His sorrow or His concern. They also pick up His joy. Near the end of Matthew's gospel, the 25th chapter and verse 31, it says "...when the Son of Man comes in His glory, all the angels" come "with Him." When He comes back to set up His kingdom for

all of His redeemed, the angels are gonna be there. They have a full interest in all the unfolding of redemptive history. And that started, of course, even at the beginning of the work of Christ. You remember in chapter 2 of Luke, the shepherds were out in the field, the angels showed up, one angel says, "Don't be afraid...I bring you good news of great joy...today in the city of David...been born for you, a Savior..." And then all the angels respond to the birth of a Savior, "Glory to God in the highest...on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." Why do the angels rejoice and celebrate because a Savior has been born? Because they know this brings about salvation, which brings joy to God. In fact, in I Peter 1:12 it says angels desire to look into these things to understand them. And again, in the book of Revelation, chapter 3, a wonderful statement is made there in verse 5. "He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments. I will not erase his name from the book of life"...talking about believers..."and I will confess his name"...says Jesus..."I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." When the Lord goes to Heaven, He confesses our name before the Father and our name before the angels. The angels have a great interest in redemption. Why? Because they share in the joy of God. These Pharisees and these scribes and anybody else who has no interest in lost sinners being recovered don't even understand the joy of God or the joy of the angels or the joy of the redeemed. The angels even have an interest in judgment according to Revelation 14:10. They're gonna be around when God does His judgment on those who refused His Son.

So if you asked a simple question, What goes on in Heaven, pretty easy to sum up...the worship of God, the exultation of Christ, the fullness of holiness and endless, perfect joy. And right now it's going on. As one sinner after another is sought and found and recovered, the party never ends. God places the highest value on the worth of a sinner, one soul recovered, very unlike the frauds and the fakes who serve Satan and have no love for the lost. Jesus said of the Pharisees, you only make more sons of hell with your efforts. So the indictment, frankly, is inescapable. How can you affirm the ethical responsibility of a shepherd to find a sheep, how can you affirm the importance of a woman finding a coin and be utterly critical of Me recovering lost souls? How can you understand the joy of a village of men and the joy of a village of women and not the joy of God? How can you condemn Me for doing what brings God joy?

The theology becomes clear and the Christology. Let me take you back through the story in your mind again. It is God in Christ who is that woman. God doesn't mind being compared to a woman. It is God in Christ who is that woman seeking the lost sinner hidden in the cracks, in the dust, in the debris of a dirty world of sin. It is God in Christ who initiates the search for the sinner. It is God who initiates the search for that sinner because that sinner belongs to Him, that sinner is in the house of His own sovereign election. It is God in Christ who initiates the search and it is God alone who finds because the coin is inanimate, lifeless, dead, can do nothing on its own. It is God in Christ who searches intently, who comes all the way down to this world, all the way down to death, all the way down to the ignominious death on the cross. It is God who sends His Son way down, all the way down, turn on the light of the gospel to sweep, to search, to pursue the sinner in every dark and

hidden place. It is God in Christ who shines the light of the glorious gospel of Christ on that lost sinner. It is God in Christ who reaches down, picks up the sinner and restores him back to the heavenly treasury where his name has been written since before the foundation of the world. And it is God, then, who breaks loose in joy into which all the holy inhabitants of Heaven, men and angels enter. The celebrations of Heaven are not just for the recovered coin and the recovered sheep, but for the Recoverer...God, Himself. For God to recover us... costly grace. He had to come all the way down, all the way down to the cross, death on the cross, down into the dirt of a tomb. Costly grace, because He was exposed to sin for the first time in His eternal existence. He came down and lived with sinners, down in the dirt, in the debris, in the cracks. But in that costly grace was great power because the coin was inanimate, lifeless, hidden in the darkness, but it had the power to find us, to pick us up, carry us back. There is no religion that has a God like this. There is no religion in the world that has a God even of their own invention who seeks and saves unworthy sinners because they have value in His view, because they are His own, eternally elect. There is no God in any other religion who goes to find His enemies and make them His friends and build them a room in His own house for the sheer joy that He receives in saving them. There is no God like this who, then, takes them to live with Him forever and finds in them satisfaction. This is our God and then this is the character of the people who truly represent our God. One of the reasons we have baptism here on Sunday nights is so that you can enter into the joy of Heaven. I hope that's your supreme joy.

One final comment, verse 10. The sinner repents, same in verse 7, "over one sinner who repents"... "over one sinner who repents." The sheep is helpless, the sheep is near dead, can do nothing, has to be picked up, put on the shepherd's back and carried back. The shepherd carries the full burden, the full weight of the search, the find, the recovery and the restoration. The coin is inanimate, helpless, dead, lifeless. The Lord has to do the finding and the restoration. But our Lord makes this very clear that this does not happen without repentance. It does not happen without repentance. You say, well, isn't that only half of the deal, repentance, like, turning from sin? What about the other half? The only thing that would cause you to turn from sin would be that you found something greater. The assumption, whenever the New Testament talks about true repentance is that it implies that you're turning from and turning to. Our Lord makes it clear that this never happens apart from repentance. This is really important in both of these stories and it comes full bloom in the story of the prodigal. And we see exactly what repentance looks like there. But next week instead of going into the prodigal cause some people will be gone and I don't want to start without everybody here, I'm gonna take you into the subject of repentance and we're gonna talk about what our Lord means when He talks about repentance.

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