

Last week we looked at the first story in this trilogy—the story of the lost sheep
This week we are looking at the second story—the story of the lost coin¹
At first glance it seems as there is nothing new here—just a different setting
But there are some things of significance to note, even some surprises
Read Luke 15:1-3, 8-10

First parable—Jesus likens the Pharisees to an "unclean" shepherd
Second parable—Jesus likens them to a careless woman who has lost a precious coin
In Middle Eastern culture a speaker cannot compare a male audience to a woman without offense
But that is exactly what Jesus does—Why?
Parable 1—"What man of you..."
Parable 2—"Or what woman..."—leaving off the final "of you"
To add the "of you" would only seek to intensify the offense to no additional purpose
However, the offense is still present

Stories of women are present in scripture and in other Jewish writings of the day—but not many
Even more rare is the pairing or coupling of male and female stories—i.e. twice in Isaiah
However we see this in the teachings of Jesus and it is particularly true in the Gospel of Luke

1. Pair of stories with nearly the same thrust
2. Cases where Luke has chosen two accounts with a similar or identical theme

See power point presentation of ***Parallel Passages on Men and Women in the Gospel of Luke***
27 examples by Kenneth Bailey

This list is even more amazing when the position of women in first-century Jewish life is observed
Grim example by Ben Sirach of Jerusalem, ca. 195 BC
*For the moth comes out of clothes,
And a woman's spite out of woman.
A man's spite is preferable to a woman's kindness
Women give rise to shame and reproach. (Sir. 42:13-14)*
Women were not taught the Torah
*If any man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law
it is as though he taught her lechery. (Mishnah, R. Eliezar, Sot. 3:4)*
From ca. 200 BC to AD 200 harsh anti-feminine attitudes are reflected in the tradition

Back to our parable—Jesus has deliberately chosen a woman as the central figure of this parable
Both Jesus and Luke are remarkably affirming of both women and men
Particularly as full and equal participants in the kingdom of God
The importance of women in the kingdom is clearly "on the agenda"

Beyond the importance of including a story about a woman
This parable repeats much of what is said theologically in the last parable
But the lost coin story includes its own unique nuances

¹ Bailey, Kenneth, *Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15, Chapter 2, The Good Woman and the Lost Coin*, Concordia Publishing, pages 93-108. [Source used as basic material for this message.]

Building material in the north Galilee is a beautiful black basalt

No reference in the parable to this area of Palestine

However, this is the main location of Jesus' public ministry

Houses of the common folk were built of this local basalt

First century homes were generally smaller than a one car garage

Windows are about 6 inches high and placed in the wall about 7 feet above ground—slits

Floors were covered with flat basalt stones taken from the lake

Cracks between the stones are naturally wide where a coin could easily get lost

This is the picture that would have formed in the minds of people as Jesus told the parable

A woman in a small room with walls, floor, and ceiling of black basalt

Windows are very small and well above eye level

She has dropped a silver coin in the wide cracks of a stone floor

No wonder she lights a lamp and sweeps the house—making a diligent search

The coin itself— To us, a coin is only a little thing—penny, nickel, dime, quarter—rarely a dollar coin

Often much is made of its value in comparison to the first parable about the shepherd

Contrast is of a rich man with 100 sheep and a poor woman with only 10 coins

However, nothing says the shepherd owns the sheep—he may have been hired as a shepherd

The woman is not necessarily poor—she has 10 drachmas

—each drachma was worth about a day's wage for a laborer so ?? \$100 bill??

Natural assumption that they were given to her by her husband for household expenses

It is possible that they are part of a necklace, but more likely the household cash box

Jesus takes on the identity of both the shepherd and the woman

So the rich-poor contrast seems less valid

More likely it is the male-female contrast that is intended

Woman has lost 1/10th of her funds to manage the household

Woman is trusted with a relatively large sum of money for a modest family

It is 1/3rd of the month's income

The woman is fully responsible and doesn't shrink from this responsibility

The woman is a symbol of Jesus—

Parables of "the good shepherd" and the "good woman"

The woman accepts responsibility for losing the coin

Last week we noted that the shepherd is specifically blamed for losing the sheep

It deviates from normal grammar patters to say, "...and losing one of them"

Instead of saying that the sheep wandered off and was lost

However at the party afterwards, he "saves face" by saying,

*Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep **that** was lost*

Among his peers, he saves face by not admitting it was his fault

But in the parable of the lost coin—the woman accepts full responsibility—she lost it

She takes the time and energy—pays the price—to look for the coin until she finds it

Then in the end when all her friends come to celebrate with her

She says, *Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin **that I had lost***

This is a brave woman and goes against the cultural norm

The woman's care and diligence in looking for the lost coin is spelled out more than in the lost sheep
In the story of the shepherd—no details are given about the search, we imagine them
The woman, after discovering the coin is lost, lights the lamp, sweeps the house, and searches
What it takes to find the coin is given greater emphasis in this story

She shares her joy at finding the coin, while maintaining her integrity and responsibility for losing it
The friends and neighbors would have known that he lost the sheep
He doesn't come home at the normal time and then comes home with one sheep
But no one would know she lost the coin or found it again if she didn't tell them
Even then the amount of money on hand is not shared publically
When telling the neighbors she found the coin, she doesn't say I had 10 coins and lost 1
She simply says "I have found the coin that I had lost"
In even holding the celebration, the woman reveals more than the shepherd

Sheep wander off—coins do not, even though we sometimes feel like they do
By merely having a party, she admits fault and admits it publicly
She also affirms her integrity
Trusted by her husband in the first place—and clearly now as well
She calls her friends, telling them of her diligence in fulfilling her responsibilities
"I have found the coin that I had lost."

The worth of a coin is unchanged just because it is lost
The sheep could be wounded or the wool damaged
The prodigal son in the next parable could be messed up by his experiences in the far country
The coin loses none of its value by being lost
When we feel lost, we generally see ourselves as having less value
This parable counters that—a coin is a coin

Why would the woman make the effort to look for this lost coin?
It is an affirmation of her own integrity and responsibility
It had value to her and she determines to find it

She knows the coin is in the house—assumption because she doesn't look elsewhere for the coin
With sufficient effort, she **can** find it
The lost sheep is out there somewhere and it is possible the shepherd can't find it
The sheep could even have been killed and eaten by a wild animal
But the coin has no natural predator—she will persist until she finds it, knowing it is somewhere

The joy of the neighbors over the coin found is a mirror of the joy in heaven over a repentant sinner
I think it is interesting that in both of these stories—there is no talk of repentance until the end
Nothing about the parables indicate repentance
The first mention of repentance comes in the mention of the "joy in heaven"
*According to Wikipedia, **Repentance**^[1] is the activity of [reviewing one's actions](#) and feeling [contrition](#) or regret for past wrongs.^[2] It generally^[citation needed] involves a commitment to personal change and resolving to live a more responsible and humane life.*
But if Jesus is the shepherd or the woman—it is not Jesus that repents
The lost sheep or the lost coin is analogous to the sinner that repents

Neither the lost sheep or the lost coin has ability to review one's actions
Feel contrition or regret and commit to personal change
Last week we talked about how Jesus redefined repentance with the parable
For the lost sheep—repentance means acceptance of being found
The sheep allowed the shepherd to find and pick up the sheep
For the lost coin—repentance means being found

I think it is interesting that these parables don't end with...
There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who "is found"
Or ...over one sinner who "comes home"
Both of which would seem to have more integrity with the flow of story
It seems to me that the uses of the word repentance here is significant
There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.
We pile more on repentance than Jesus did!
Forgiveness is ours—the deal is done—sin is forgiven
It isn't about our ability to be sorry and chose to change
It is about Jesus—and everything has already been done
There is nothing more for us to do

It is true that sometimes in our personal relationships there is more to do
Or in our own need to deal with our stuff—we have to drill down and work it
In that way there may be need to recognize what we've done
How it affects others, confess our wrongs, and work to make change

But as far as our spiritual condition before God...
Repentance means being found! Nothing more!
And that is occasion for incredible joy—on earth as it is in heaven!!