

Homework for Session 2:

The following observational notes on the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32 are provided as an example. Your assignment is to practice the observational steps one through four that you learned in Session Two to begin your study of Luke 15:3-10, (the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin).

"From of old no one has heard
or perceived by the ear,
no eye has seen a God besides you,
who acts for those who wait for him."
Isaiah 64:4 (ESV)

"Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law."
Psalms 119:18 (ESV)

Luke 15:11-32 Observations

We observe and read every day (does texting count?). But if we approach His words casually, we tend to bring a lot of un-scriptural background and context that may not really be in the original text. And if our understanding of His textual basis is off, that will cause us great difficulty in properly interpreting and synthesizing what the Lord is truly trying to tell us.

Over the next several weeks, I would like to share with you some of my personal notes and observations as I apply Andrew's study principles to Jesus' parable of the lost son. This is a story that is probably familiar to a lot of us; but I look forward to new insights that the Lord may reveal to me if I approach this passage with discipline and with fresh eyes rather than coming in with full boasting of what I already thinks it all means.

Luke Chapter 15 (ESV)

¹¹And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me^(A) the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided^(B) his property between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in^(C) reckless living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to^(A) one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶And he^(D) was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"But^(E) when he^(F) came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father,^(G) I have sinned against^(H) heaven and before you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and^(J) ran and^(K) embraced him and^(L) kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.^(M) I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'^(N) ²²But the father said to his servants,^(O) 'Bring quickly^(P) the best robe, and put it on him, and put^(Q) a ring on his hand, and^(R) shoes on his feet. ²³And bring^(Q) the fattened calf and kill it, and^(R) let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴For this my son^(S) was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might^(U) celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came,^(U) who has devoured^(V) your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹And he said to him, 'Son,^(W) you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²It was fitting^(X) to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother^(V) was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Footnotes:

- a. [Luke 15:15](#) Greek *joined himself to*
- b. [Luke 15:21](#) Some manuscripts add *treat me as one of your hired servants*
- c. [Luke 15:22](#) Greek *bondservants*

Cross references:

- A. [Luke 15:12](#) : [Deut 21:17](#)
- B. [Luke 15:12](#) : [Luke 15:30](#); [Mark 12:44](#)
- C. [Luke 15:13](#) : [Eph 5:18](#); [Titus 1:6](#); [1 Pet 4:4](#)
- D. [Luke 15:16](#) : [Luke 16:21](#)
- E. [Luke 15:17](#) : [1 Kgs 8:47](#)
- F. [Luke 15:17](#) : [Acts 12:11](#)
- G. [Luke 15:18](#) : [Exodus 10:16](#)
- H. [Luke 15:18](#) : [Matt 21:25](#); [John 3:27](#)
- I. [Luke 15:19](#) : [Luke 7:6, 7](#)
- J. [Luke 15:20](#) : [James 4:8](#)
- K. [Luke 15:20](#) : [Gen 33:4](#); [Acts 20:37](#)
- L. [Luke 15:20](#) : [2 Sam 14:33](#)
- M. [Luke 15:21](#) : [Luke 15:19](#)
- N. [Luke 15:22](#) : [Zech 3:3-5](#)
- O. [Luke 15:22](#) : [Gen 41:42](#); [Esth 3:10](#); [8:2](#)
- P. [Luke 15:22](#) : [Ezek 16:10](#)
- Q. [Luke 15:23](#) : [1 Sam 28:24](#)
- R. [Luke 15:23](#) : [Luke 12:19](#)
- S. [Luke 15:24](#) : [Luke 15:32](#); [Rom 11:15](#); [Eph 2:1](#); [Col 2:13](#); [Rev 3:1](#)
- T. [Luke 15:29](#) : [Luke 15:23](#)
- U. [Luke 15:30](#) : [Prov 29:3](#)
- V. [Luke 15:30](#) : [Luke 15:12](#)
- W. [Luke 15:31](#) : [John 8:35](#)
- X. [Luke 15:32](#) : [Luke 15:29](#)
- Y. [Luke 15:32](#) : [Luke 15:24](#)

LUKE 15:11-32 Notes, Thoughts, Reactions, and Questions

These are my actual notes as I study and ponder the passage. Note that despite my clear intent to focus properly on content, I still easily strayed to interpretations and applications. (It is okay as they occur, just jot them down quickly and move on; it is premature to do too much synthesis and analysis at this point before I had fully grasped the passage.)

11: He = Jesus

12: God as Father; what an insult to the father (the son showed the true intentions of his heart: not of love or family, but simply for his expected wealth and independence). But the son is given what is coming to him (all legal and per custom); but a bit of foreshadowing in really getting what is coming to him...

13: Did he have a good time? In the end, he really has nothing to show for all that wealth. Reckless living probably code for something really nasty and bad.

14: God tests us. Now what? It's times of trying, at wits' end that really reveals a man's soul. Famine occurs after everything was spent.

15: Yucky, unclean pigs. Apt imagery of humility to serve the unclean that has it better than us (also reminds me of the Discovery program *Dirty Jobs*). A country where pigs are raised... he is pretty far from home.

16: Further humility. But he still expected provisions. Where are his friends? (I do this, too; sensing an entitlement, justice, and fairness in this world.)

17: Repentance... or plotting a plan?

18: The son quit his new life to return to his old. Psalm 84:10: for a day in your courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

19: Disinherited, still have favor? I am beginning to think the son is showing honest, true, deep humility (but still not getting the full picture).

20: From shame to overwhelming love. (Application: God make most of the effort, just show up.)

21: The plan in play. But if the plan is fully played out, the son has lost any real connection and inheritance to his family.

22: Robe, ring, shoe... need to research customs and meanings for these items.... But the clear emphasis is on restored, joyous connection.

23: Celebration! Fattened calf slaughtered... ponder its implications.

24: Dead -> Alive; Lost -> Found (ponder and connect these themes)

25: The faithful son is a hard, obedient worker. His attention is drawn not by direct invitation but by the celebratory music.

26-27: Had to ask servant what was going on. He is initially informed by the servant (not of the father) of the great news.

28: What should be his immediate reaction? Not celebration, but of equity, fairness, and indignat. (Do I harbor those feelings, too?) Father entreats the faithful son to come.

29: Obedient cry (Oh, how I cry this, too). All his (my) faithful works amounted to bringing the unfaithful to celebration!? Where is his (my) fattened calf?

30: Ouch: usage of 'son of yours' in reference to his brother.

31: Wow! And here is the Lord/Father's reply to his (our) grumblings: "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours."

32: Celebrate the return of the lost. This is repeated from verse 24. Did the faithful son join?

Surrounding Context

Chapter 15 begins with an audience of tax collectors, sinners who are then joined by Pharisees and scribes that grumble about the company that Jesus keeps. Then Jesus begins the three parables of the lost (and found): sheep, coin, and the son. There is great celebration of the recovery of the lost. Does the sheep and coin that remain in the fold complain about the lost and found?

Divisions

There are four acts in this passage:

Act I: Inheritance and wild living (11-16)

Act II: Realization ('When he came to his senses' connector 17-20)

Act III: Return and celebration ('But while he was still a long ways off' connector 21-24)

Act IV: Faithful brother's grumbling ('Meanwhile' connector 25-32)

Meditations

Themes and Main Ideas

Do riches, treasures, pleasures of this world satisfy? Does it last?

Does sinning against heaven and the father result in forever lost inheritance?

The father does not condemn the son for his past ways. It is always a matter of his heart (and of his unceasing love).

Some of the key figures, words, and theme of this passage: father, son, sin, obedience, repentance (lost and found/dead and alive)... compassion and love?

Why strive to be obedient to the Lord? Out of devoted love, or for His preemptive reward?

Eternal Truths

- The redemptive power of love;
- the immediacy and currency of our heart (come as we are, as we are);
- the folly and fallacy of freedom and independence in *reckless* living;
- the first will be last; the last will be first.

Significant Verses

Verses 24 and 32 "... *was* dead ... *is* alive ... *was* lost ... *is* found"

Verse 31 "you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours"

Significant Words

Verse 17: '*came* to himself'; **Verse 20:** '*compassion*'; **Verse 24:** '*dead*', '*alive*', '*lost*' '*found*'

God's Attributes

- Father
- Provider
- Loving / Longing for us / Inclusive
- Compassionate
- Forgiving
- Giving
- Teacher
- Patient / Long-Suffering