

The Worth of One Sinner

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon focuses on Luke 15, highlighting the profound truth that Jesus receives and welcomes sinners with open arms, emphasizing the worth of one soul, the Gospel joy over each individual, and the absolute freeness and availability of God's love in redemption. The message stresses the universal offer of salvation to all, without discrimination or hesitation, echoing the welcoming love of God for any sinner who is lost.

Scripture: Isaiah 45:22, Hosea 14:2, Luke 15:1, Acts 16:31, John 3:16, Isaiah 55:6

Topics: "God's Unconditional Love", "The Joy of Redemption"

Description

This sermon focuses on Luke 15, highlighting the profound truth that Jesus receives and welcomes sinners with open arms, emphasizing the worth of one soul, the Gospel joy over each individual, and the absolute freeness and availability of God's love in redemption. The message stresses the universal offer of salvation to all, without discrimination or hesitation, echoing the welcoming love of God for any sinner who is lost.

Transcript

J.C. Ryle said, referring to a particular chapter in the New Testament, few chapters perhaps have done more good to the souls of men than Luke chapter 15. Ryle could be right, he often was. So Luke 15 is our portion in this first session this morning.

A Bible reader is usually very familiar with the general contents of Luke 15. So we're not going to read the chapter, rather our text will be the first two verses. Luke 15, 1 and 2. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners to hear him.

And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them. That one statement, this man receives sinners and eats with them, we ought to all be thankful for that this morning. They were right in that statement.

Wrong motives, right statement. And that statement, this man receives sinners and dines with them, those words are the context for the entire chapter. And just chew on that for a little while.

This man receives sinners and eats with them is the context for the whole rest of the chapter. They literally were accurate words and glorious words, if you view them in a right way. Because Jesus' entire mission was embracing sinners.

Coming to rescue, not the self-righteous, not coming to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners to repentance. But their words were words not of admiration, but of agitation and antagonism. Their words were words not of men as a commendation, but as a condemnation.

The heart of their hard-hearted murmuring was probably driven by jealousy. Because this non-rabbinic teacher and miracle worker was connecting personally and prophetically with all the common people. Scripture says, and the common people heard Him gladly.

Verse 1 says, they were drawing near to Him. So, while the people connected increasingly with the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry, the Pharisees and scribes connected with no one. Really.

The Pharisees despised Him increasingly, but their words here, spoken in ignorance and in spite, were actually a description of our Savior's messianic mission. Think of that. This man received sinners and dines with them.

What an amazing... they knew not what they were saying, did they? And those words directly prompted our Lord, prompted from Him, in response. J.C. Rowe says, quote, three of the most instructive parables that ever fell from His lips. Well, actually, not three parables, it's just one.

If you go back and look, it says He spake this parable, and it is singular. One parable, everything in the chapter now is one parable, in three parts, three points, three illustrations. The illustrations of which would have rung true in the hearts of the people who were hearing Him.

So, this man, rather than standing at arm's length and heart length from sinners, actually receives them. If you're a sinner here this morning, meaning an unconverted person, and you know in your heart you're not a believer, God has brought you here for these days to hear several things. But I know this morning He wants you to hear, as an estranged sinner, this man, the man Christ Jesus, receives and welcomes and touches and forgives and dines with, fellowships with, whatever sinner will come.

The worst of sinners, all kinds of sinners, even Gentile sinners, even New England sinners, even the worst bunch around, Texas hardened sinners, the down and out, the up and out, the scorned and the scarred, the skeptics, the neediest, the lepers, harlots, tax collectors, the dirty, rotten scumbags, the low-life rejects and the broken losers, this man receives such people. Gives us hope, because such were some of us, right? This man receives sinners and eats with them. That's the context of the chapter.

These three stories, one parable, connected with his hearers, because think about it, a man loses a sheep, and he leaves the whole bunch, the whole flock, to go seek the one. There were probably men hearing him that had lost sheep, and had remembered a time, I went after that one, yeah, I went and got that one. There would have been women, possibly there in the crowd, that had misplaced the coin, and he starts saying, what woman, if she loses a coin, a valuable coin, will clean house extra, stop everything, to find that coin? Some woman there could have said, I did that one time, that was me.

Or what parent, within his hearing, would have had a lost son, a lost honor. At that moment, when he began to speak about, a man had two sons, the younger of them ended up in a far country. Jesus was speaking their experience to their hearts.

This set the cold, calculating, hyper-Calvinists to murmuring. They didn't like it. And the word is greatly murmured.

They were hot under the collar. They had growing anger. Murmuring began to come out of their hearts, and their words, harsh, strong, grumbling.

So what is our Lord teaching here in response to their murmuring? Luke 15 is not primarily about an estranged son in a far country. That's just one of the points of the parable. It's not primarily about a son in a far country and his repentance.

It's about the welcoming love of God for any sinner who's lost. That God, this man who receives sinners, wants to gather in all the sinners He can. Jesus' response to this criticism, these critical words, this man receives sinners, think of this.

His response is to speak of the character of God. That God is not like the murmurers. Rather, He's like the shepherd who goes after the one sheep.

He's like the woman who goes after the one coin. He's like the loving Father who welcomes a rebellious son home for good. So what do we see here? Let's unpack this and observe this this morning and then we'll plot.

First from Luke 15, in Jesus' words, we find, first of all, this chapter teaches us the worth of one soul. In our day of big and mass and group and all that, we lose sight of the one. The one individual.

The value and worth and importance of one. One person, one soul, one at a time. One soul, this parable is teaching, is a supreme value.

And the world loses sight of that and the church loses sight of that and often individual believers lose sight of it. Because big impresses us, but one doesn't impress us. We see throughout this chapter though, scan it with me now with an open Bible, I want you looking at it, the emphasis our Lord makes on the one.

It's mentioned ten times. Verse 4, loses one of them. Verse 6, found my sheep, one.

Verse 7, one sinner. Verse 8, loses one coin. Verse 9, the coin I lost.

Verse 10, one sinner. Verses 11 and 12, two sons, the younger of them, that's one son. Verse 24, this my son.

Verse 32, this your brother, one. One. One sheep, one coin, one person.

So, one lost sheep in the parable trunks the care for the 99 in that moment. One lost coin stops everything in the house. And one lost soul is all important.

The Lord Jesus Christ is contrasting the Pharisees murmuring about Him receiving and welcoming and eating and hanging out with sinners. He contrasts that with one. One is valuable.

One is my focus oftentimes. Now, think about this for a moment. Covenant theology, or at least some branches of it particularly, not all, clearly believe that salvation in Jesus Christ is a group project.

Primarily about families. Covenant children, etc. Thus the term that's used often, a child of a believing family or believing parents is called a covenant child.

And I understand, and I'm not trying to speak down to that necessarily, but the New Testament gives a more clear picture in some ways. That of the individual. That conversion is an issue of one soul before

God.

That the salvation of one must happen individually. One at a time. Zacchaeus, you come down.

Mary Magdalene, out of whom He cast seven demons. The thief on the cross, today you. Lydia of the Philippian jail.

Saul of Tarsus. One at a time. God saves one at a time.

He came to you, if you're a Christian, at a point in time, at just the right time for you, and the Spirit of God zeroed in on you and said, you're mine with life-giving power. And you awoke. And Christ was loving you and focusing on you and saving you in that moment as if there was no one else to save.

The worth of your soul individually is in this chapter. And God, even in times of revival and awakening, when He saves thousands, He does it individually, one at a time. Now, He may save a thousand over two weeks in some country in a time of awakening.

But when He's saving the thousand simultaneously, He's saving intimately each soul. Think of the time, if you can remember, when you were converted. When you were drawn with cords of love.

It was intimate. It was as if you had God's full attention, full concentration, full application of His love. He was loving you and saving you in that moment.

One soul at a time. In the Welsh revival of 1904-1905, history says that 50,000 to 100,000 people across Wales were converted and they were added to the membership of churches. But from Christ's standpoint, it was one at a time.

He doesn't save in mass quantities, vaguely, corporately. Paul said, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. One soul.

The value of one soul. That's what is here. Our Savior did this consistently.

Think about it. The references in the Gospels. Now, Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Lord, He whom You love is sick. That disciple whom Jesus loved, Paul, never got over the fact that Christ loved him. The worth of each and every soul.

The Gospel focuses on the one. And so should we. The Gospel-centered believer sees the individual in front of them day in and day out.

Your neighbor. Your colleague. Your classmate.

Your friend. Sees the individual. The worth of a soul.

Not the crowd. The Gospel must go to each person we can take it to one-on-one. And this parable is showing that.

The Lord Jesus was destroying their murmuring complaint by showing here the value of one. The seeking love of God for one. We must focus on individual people.

We must hear them, love them, influence them, and win them one soul at a time. That's what the Lord is teaching here in this chapter, the worth of one. But what else is here? Secondly, there's another theme that runs throughout the chapter.

As much as the one. That is, Gospel joy over each one. Joy concerning every single one of them.

The Pharisees were murmuring, but the Lord Jesus had joy over every one. Have you ever seen in this chapter this recurring theme of joy? Luke does that here. Joy is the note about the welcoming love of the Savior.

Look at it here again in the chapter. Follow me there. Verse 5 mentions rejoicing.

Verse 6, rejoice with me. Verse 7, joy in heaven. Verse 9, rejoice with me.

Verse 10, there is joy. Verse 23, be merry. Verse 24, be merry.

Verse 25, dancing. Verse 29, merry. And verse 32, merry.

Ten times He mentions the worth of one and ten times the joy over all of them. Quite striking. The Pharisees were grumbling, but Jesus said the angels are rejoicing over one and the Father joyfully throws a party for the returning one son.

Our Lord was a man of joy. A man of sorrows, wasn't He? But He was a man of joy also. It says that Jesus in that day rejoiced in spirit.

What a picture it would have been to be able to see His face close up in that moment of joy. Was He breaking a grin? Was He smiling? Was there a twinkle in His eye? How did He look when He felt joy? He rejoiced in spirit. Redemptive joy, Luke says, is always occurring in heaven.

Religious people always grumble about gospel joy. Now, reformed people often lack this note, both sometimes in theology or at least in heart and spirit and emotions and attitude. We can be so analytical, so suspicious, so reserved and overly cautious, contrasted with the spirit of the early church.

Think about this. In the early church in the book of Acts, when there was a profession of faith, there was great joy in that city and they baptized them. Profession of faith.

Credible profession of faith. Joy and rejoicing and baptism. That was the order.

In Acts, this big theme of gospel joy. Just like in Luke 15. Acts would parallel Luke 15 on this.

Just remember these statements in Acts. They had gladness and singleness of heart. The man went walking and leaping and praising God.

Well, he would have been kicked out of most reformed churches. Today, you don't do that. And they departed from the council rejoicing they were counted worthy to suffer for the name.

In Samaria, there was great joy in that city. The Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing. And it says later, the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

And the Jews stirred up trouble and raised persecution against Paul and Silas. And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. When was the last time you were? It's an event.

It's an experience. In a moment, you're filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. They were.

Ten times here Jesus sounds the note of gospel joy about the Father's love for all sinners. The worth of one. Joy over every single one of them.

That's what's happening here. Jesus is destroying every view, every attitude, every theological syllogism that creates hesitancy, reservation about, or theological lessening of God's universal love. And when I use the word universal, you readers, don't panic.

This is not Rob Bell's word. That's universalism. The reality is God so loved the world, He has a universal benevolence toward the non-elect.

He's good to all, the wicked and the righteous. And He has a universal love that He desires not the death of any wicked person. Ezekiel says that in his prophecy.

And the doctrine of election or absolute predestination or God's eternal decree, no truth is to lessen, qualify, compromise, neutralize, soften or quench the doctrine of the universal, unconditional, joyful love of God for sinners. That is genuine. And one truth doesn't cancel out or lessen other truths.

All truths are truth, and they're fully true even though our little pea brain can't figure it out and make them always relate to each other. Don't try to. Believe them and rejoice in them.

The love of God in the Son of Man, this Savior, this Man who receives sinners, is available to all as a genuine offer. Christ freely offered to sinners. And that's what the Savior is saying to them.

Think of what the hearers, when these sinners were drawing near to Him, and He was receiving them and embracing them and being loving toward them and welcoming them and breaking bread with them, and they were sitting next to Him, and He spoke with words of authority. Gracious words coming out of His lips. They were captivated.

He spoke with authority. And here's this one who's drawn near. He is freely offering Himself to all without discrimination.

Which brings us to our third and final point. The worth of one. Joy over everyone.

Ten times one is mentioned. Ten times joy is mentioned. But the final point here, and this is by implication and application, Jesus is teaching here the freeness, the absolute freeness and availability of the love of God in redemption.

The unlimited offer of Christ to sinners. The Gospel free offer is right here by implication and by spiritual and theological inference. The free offer of Christ to all.

Now the supposed problem here that is created is this. Follow me. If divine election is true, and we would say it is, we know it is.

If a man cannot contribute to his salvation and he cannot, if no one can come to Christ unless the Spirit draws him, which they can't, if salvation is all of grace, which it is, if Christ died effectually for the sheep, which He did, if by one redemptive act He saved forever all who would believe, which He did, if all the elect will be saved, which they will, if all that's true, then here's the problem. Who do we take the Gospel to? Take your compass or your spiritual meter reader and anybody you're going to share the Gospel with,

check them out and find out if they're elect first. Surely you don't want to share the Gospel with somebody that's not, right? Wrong.

Wrong. No one can ever know who the elect is. That's not a responsibility in evangelism, is it? The Gospel is to go to all.

Who is the Gospel message really for? But how often have you been affected and hampered and crippled and paralyzed by theology that says how much can I freely offer Christ to this person? I don't know if the Spirit's working in them. I don't know if they're being drawn. I don't know if they're being broken.

I don't know if they're right good soiled yet, so I've got to be guarded. I've got to be careful. I can't speak about the love of Christ or the mercy of God yet.

I've got to whip them with the law first. I've got to see some bruised and bloody, beaten hearts where I think there's enough preparation of them to receive the Gospel. How should we preach Christ to anyone? Answer these questions for yourself.

Are we hesitant to tell anyone that Christ will save them if they believe the Gospel? Do we preach? Do we preach that all should and can come to Christ and they're obligated to? Jesus said to a bunch of Jews, you read the Scriptures and they testify of Me, but you will not come to Me. He puts it on them. This moral responsibility, this obligation to respond.

Do we view God? Here's a great question. Do we view God as desiring the salvation of sinners? Any sinner. Any sinner you're standing or sitting in front of, do we view God desiring the salvation of sinners? Do we hesitate to tell anyone that if they will truly come to Christ, He will receive them and save them? Now Lee, speaking about C.S. Lewis last night, Lewis said the lion said, I make no promises.

But the lion of the tribe of Judah does make a Gospel promise. Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. That's a promise.

Whosoever will, let them drink of the water of life. Whosoever believes, will have everlasting life. Do we as Reformed Christians who desire people to be saved, do we think that election and predestination hinders our offering Christ freely to anyone, anywhere, anytime? What if I'm sharing the Gospel with a non-elect person? These questions may paralyze many from freely, genuinely, in an unhindered way, in a warm way, offering a willing and available Savior of sinners who said Himself through Luke, this man receives and eats with sinners.

The right view is this. Implicit in the free offer of the Gospel. The free offer of the Gospel means we are to share the Gospel.

This successful Gospel. This conquering Gospel. This certain Gospel.

This effectual Gospel that will accomplish salvation throughout the earth. That will be a saver of life to those who believe and a saver of death to those who will not. We are to share this Gospel with everyone, anywhere, anytime, fully, without hesitating, to include the love of God that welcomes any sinner.

The Gospel is to be preached and offered to all regardless of where we think they are spiritually. The offer of salvation is not to be modified by the preacher in his preaching or presented in such a way that the sinner has in his mind he needs to somehow improve or get more prepared spiritually to be able to come.

If you're sincere enough, you can come to Christ.

If you're serious enough, if you're broken enough over your sin, He'll receive you. If your repentance is deep enough, if you surrender all areas of your life more, you can then come to Christ. No.

The word of the Gospel is come just like you are. Nothing done. Nothing felt.

Come just as you are. Immediately, fully, now. And believe on the Son of God.

And He will receive you exactly as you are. As John Bunyan said, come and welcome to Jesus Christ. That's the free offer of the Gospel.

Anytime, anywhere, with anyone you can speak to. There is no restricting the offer of Christ in the Gospel. Ian Murray said, the cross is the pulpit of God's love.

Preaching the Gospel must include an expression of the radical and embracing love of God as seen in Luke 15. On God's part toward any sinner and toward all unbelievers. And the offer of Christ to any sinner, anytime, is sincere and genuine on God's part.

He means it. He means it. The Gospel is addressed to sinners just as they are, and it tells them they can come immediately just as they are.

In repentant faith and trust. I want to give you some voices in history. Stay with me, because I'm almost getting ready to round the corner and run for the tape at the end of the race.

Here are some of the best voices in recent church history on the free offer of the Gospel to everyone. An lesser known author, but he's worth reading. David Gay said this, Are we commanded to invite, encourage, and beg all men to come to trust Christ? Can we be fully assured God's invitation is sincere and genuine? Answer, Isaiah 45, Look unto Me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth.

That's the answer. Yes. Errol Halls.

Great Reformed Baptist leader in Britain for many years. In the free offer of the Gospel, the Lord invites all men to Himself. He freely invites them to come to Him.

The sinner is not to look to see if he has any worthiness. He's not to look to see if he has any grace or signs somehow of God working in him. He has one thing to do.

Look and live immediately, fully without reservation. If the doctrines of grace limit or hinder us in any way in calling sinners to Christ, it shows we are not clear on the implications of the Gospel. Close quote.

The call of the Gospel is a universal call to all concerning the redemptive love of God for sinners. That's Ian Murray. We are called to tell every man and woman who have come from Adam this good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.

And here's an old hard-nosed theologian. Quote, God never turned away one single sinner that sought Him in repentance. If there's a sinner here today, prove it for yourself.

Christ has said, come to Me. If you come to Him, there is rest for you. Try Him and see.

It's the sinner's responsibility to come. And he will be damned if he does not. But if he will come, there is salvation for him.

A.W. Pink. Read it and rejoice. One more voice.

No one was ever more clear on this than Spurgeon. Quote, when I am preaching to sinners, I feel inclined always to beg every one of them. There's not a sinner in the world that cannot be told that if he comes to Jesus Christ, he will forgive the blackest sins ever.

Again, Spurgeon. Sinner, let me give you words of life. Jesus wants nothing from you whatsoever.

Nothing done. Nothing felt. Just come.

Ragged, penniless, just as you are. Lost, forsaken, guilty, shameful, unworthy. The love of Christ is yearning for you.

Close quote. Now brothers and sisters, let's face the Lord in our hearts about this this morning. Do we view God as desiring the salvation of sinners? Freely, warmly, genuinely.

Do we hesitate in our evangelism? Because we might say something that we shouldn't in going too far to plead with people to come. In closing, I want to gladly borrow with joy the murmuring Pharisees' words. This man receives sinners and dines with them.

Is that you? Are you a sinner who this morning and you refuse to come when you're faced with it in your conscience? You back off. You harden your heart. Because your view of God is I'm too sinful to come.

If I come, I'll get scolded. I'll get lashed. I'll get a lecture.

And therefore, He won't come. But the Gospel says this man, Christ Jesus, ten times says the worth of one. You're worth it.

Come. Ten times He says it's joyful to Me if you come. The angels rejoice if you come.

The welcoming grace feast of God's redeeming love. May God give us a warm heart. May He baptize us in the spirit of Luke 15 and let's marinate in it.

And the Spirit of our Savior saturate our minds and our hearts and set us free from the clamps of sharing the Gospel in a hindered way. And be free to share it in an unhindered way. I love Charles West's hymn, Jesus' Name, How Overall.

In there, he says this in two stanzas. Oh, that the world might taste and see. Oh, that the world might taste and see the riches of His grace, the arms of love that compass me would all mankind embrace.

I don't think you will answer to Christ one day and He says to you, Ryan, I was a little uneasy when you went that far with that guy in Texas. You pleaded with him too much. You spoke too much about My love and grace.

I don't think we're going to just please the Lord by doing it a little wrongly. You can't do it wrongly in sharing redeeming love. May God give us a heart like Wesley.

But even more, a heart like the friend of sinners. Who through His Old Testament prophets said these words? Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He's near.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Think of this. Let him return to the Lord.

If he returns, what's he going to get? Compassion. And He will have compassion on him for He will abundantly pardon. Any sinner can know with a right Gospel presentation, if I return, if I come to Jesus Christ, what is awaiting me is compassion and abundant pardon.

That verse in Isaiah 55 is Luke 15. And I love Hosea's simple instructions in Hosea. He says this.

Return to the Lord. How do you do that? Bring words. Go to God.

Go to Christ. Bring your own words. What do I say? Take away all my iniquity.

That's right there in the chapter. Hosea 14 I guess it is. Return to the Lord and take with you words and say to Him, take away all my iniquity.

And in response, a welcoming Father says through Hosea, I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely for my anger has turned from them. Anger has turned away.

At the cross. At the cross. It's turned away.

Sinners, Jesus will receive. Sound this word of grace to all. Sing it o'er and o'er again.

Make the message clear and plain. Christ receiveth sinful men. Luke 15.

That is the message. This man receives sinners and dines with them for eternity. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for this reminder given by inspiration to Luke. About this One. Our Savior.

The lover of sinners. The friend of sinners. The Savior of the world.

Apply it to our hearts. Let it get in our bloodstream. In our hands, our feet, our minds, our words, Lord.

Help us, Lord, from our own pulpits. Whether that's one-on-one with someone across the table. To sound forth the note of the love of God for sinners.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/DxYERiWfScE.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mack-tomlinson/the-worth-of-one-sinner/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net