

Reflection - The Lost Coin

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:8-10, NKJV)

The parable of the lost coin is the second of three parables which comprise the whole of Luke 15. The last of these three parables is the most popular one: the prodigal son. The father, looking out unto the horizon and awaiting his son's return is representative of God the Father, who patiently waits for His prodigal children to come home. The prodigal son represents those who know the way home and only need to make the decision to get up and return to their Father God. This parable assures us that He will receive us with open arms.

But some are lost and do not know the way back home. They are like sheep without their Shepherd. The first parable addresses those persons who, like sheep, know they are lost, but do not know how to return home. The Shepherd here exemplifies God the Son. He left the 99 sheep to find the lost one. He left the glory of the Father and came to seek and save the lost, and carries us in His Arms and takes us home.

In the third parable a coin is lost. It being an inanimate object, a coin doesn't even know it is lost. It has no consciousness of its deplorable situation. It represents those who are lost and may not even realize it. But what is interesting and at the same time disturbing is that the coin is lost inside of the house. Have you ever wondered if there are lost persons inside of God's house and among God's professed followers? This parable suggests that such is in fact the case. Furthermore, it alerts us that a work is to be done on their behalf. But that work can only be done by the Holy Spirit, for only God's Spirit knows the heart and is capable of stirring up the spirit of man that he may be found and rescued from its lost and wretched condition within our own Christian brotherhood.

Luke 15 synthesizes the lost: those who know they are lost and know the way back home; those who know they are lost, but do not know the way back home; and those who are lost and do not even know they are lost. Furthermore, it allows us to perceive how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are active and on the alert working in unison seeking the lost.

The day will come when God's Holy Spirit will be withdrawn from the world and the words in Revelation will come to pass as "the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." (Revelation 22:11, NKJV) Here's a quote from Ellen White's writings:

[W]hen... our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution... then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that

the end is near. As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy be a sign to us that the limit of God's forbearance is reached, that the measure of our nation's iniquity is full, and that the angel of mercy is about to take her flight, never to return. The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the time of Jacob's trouble. (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 451)

Reflecting upon Jerusalem's fate of old we may get a better understanding of the terrible consequences of rejecting salvation as did Jerusalem, for after God's Spirit was withdrawn from it the way was opened for that doomed city to suffer its terrible retribution and be destroyed by the Roman armies. Here's what was happening behind the scenes in heaven as Jesus wept in agony over that beloved city:

When the fast westering sun should pass from sight in heaven, Jerusalem's day of grace would be ended. While the procession was halting on the brow of Olivet, it was not yet too late for Jerusalem to repent. The angel of mercy was then folding her wings to step down from the golden throne to give place to justice and swift-coming judgment. (Desire of Ages, p. 578)

I must admit that when I read the above couple of quotes I did a double take astounded that in each of them the Holy Spirit, which Ellen White refers to in these and other verses as the angel of mercy, is described as "about to take her flight" and "folding her wings," respectively. This caught my eye and made me wonder because when we speak of angels, as well as when Ellen White writes about angels, we and she always use the masculine pronoun merely to facilitate speech and understanding. However, in these quotes the pronoun is feminine: her wings, her flight. And here's the thing, such is consistent with the parable of the lost coin because, although in the first and third parables male figures are used to represent the work of God the Father and God the Son on behalf of the salvation of man, in the parable of the lost coin Jesus chose to use a female figure to represent the work of God the Holy Spirit. So I can only fathom that Ellen White wrote so because she was inspired by God's Spirit and all inspired writings harmonize. This detail once again affirms for me her divine calling and I invite the reader to study more in depth her works. I've now placed links in my website to many of her books (in both audio and text format) which you too may study online.

I like that Jesus used a female figure in this parable because it bears testimony that He didn't have any hang-ups about women, and in particular to represent the meticulous work required in finding something that is very small, a coin. It further suggests that the work to be done within our midst should leave no woman behind.

Each of the three parables in Luke 15 concludes with a joyful gathering. When the sheep is brought home the man calls his friends and neighbors (in Spanish *amigos y vecinos*) saying, "Rejoice with me." (v. 6) There is also merriment with music and dancing for the

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prodigal son who is now back home. (v. 22-25) Likewise, when the coin is found the woman calls her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her. (v. 9) But there is something unique about this latter gathering, and it is that those who rejoice over the found coin were all women. This is clearly demonstrated in Spanish translations of this parable. In Spanish a masculine word denotes all males or a combination of males and females. However, when speaking strictly of females, then the feminine term of the word is used. And in the case of the lost coin, the invitees are *amigas y vecinas* (women friends and women neighbors), that is, the feminine form of the noun is used in Spanish Bibles. Hence it is a get-together of women. I envision that the parable of the lost coin portrays the model for the Women Ministries Department of our church, where women meticulously work on behalf of the lost whether they be males or females, for coins have no gender. And when these women come together it is to praise and exalt God for His work of redemption, offering grateful homage rejoicing over all the lost souls who are now found.

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