Bible Study 72

Wednesday, April 5, 2023

 St Luke’s Gospel (continued)

Chapter 15

Once again Jesus is in the midst of Pharisees and scribes who accuse him of consorting with tax Collectors and Sinners. In turn Jesus resorts to the Parable of the Lost Sheep.

The story is about repentance. It is a turn-a-round from the old attitude that sinners must be punished and that salvation is only for the righteous. Given that the Shepherd leaves the 99 to go after the one sheep that is lost, it should tell us about our attitude to the lost among us. Church cannot be an exclusive club for the holy, the rich or even for believers.

The next parable, the Lost Coin follows the same vein. The Parable of the woman who loses one of ten silver coins, mentions rejoicing in heaven among the Angels for one sinner who repents.

v.11. Introduces one of the most famous Parables; “THE PRODIGAL SON.”

It is a story that has been much used down the years. First let us be clear about what a parable truly is.

“A Parable is a Jewish Story, a teaching device, that teaches a moral lesson.”

The Prodigal Son has a limited number of Characters:

The Father

The Good Son

The Prodigal Son

The Swine

The Servants

The Fatted Calf

So who is the Father? Is he God? Is he Israel? Is he just any Father?

The Prodigal Son decides to take his inheritance and leave for a ‘far and distant land?’

So where did he go? Egypt! There was for Israel only one ‘Far and distant land’, and that was Egypt! The son went down into Egypt, where he squandered all his inheritance on wild living.

The story of the plight of the bad son, is really a repeat of the Story of Joseph. It was Joseph who went down into Egypt and got into so much trouble while his brothers stayed home with their father Jacob.

The scribes and Pharisees would have recognized the Genesis of this story.

Pigs or swine where a symbol of uncleanliness; associated with foreigners and the ungodly.

“While he was still a long way off…” the father has been waiting for his son at the gate.

“Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee…” the story is about sin and forgiveness.

The father’s response is to tell the servants to put a robe around him, sandals on his feet and a ring on his finger. They are all symbols of sonship. “Kill the fatted calf!”

Who does not welcome the Prodigal Son? Surely Jesus is pointing to the scribes and Pharisees?

The good son is right he has done everything correctly and all the father has is his, but the father still welcomes his lost son. “All I have is yours.”

The Story should be called “The Forgiving father.”

The Lost has been found.

Repentance and forgiveness.

The story has no ending. Why?

Read Chapter 15