

The Woman and The Home

The woman represents God, who seeks the souls of those who are lost in sin. The home represents the world and all of the places in which lost souls live. The home of such a poor woman would be without windows (thus necessitating the lamp, and reflective of her social standing). It would have dirt floors, possibly covered with reeds and rushes, making it very difficult to find a single lost coin. Conditions for finding one small coin were not ideal, and the woman certainly knew it would not be easy, but we cannot help being impressed by the fact that she pressed on anyway.

The Search

The search for the coin represents the efforts made to find lost souls who desire to return to the Father in heaven. We need to appreciate that the woman used every means available to her to find the lost coin. To begin the search, she lit a lamp. The lit lamp represents God's word, even as David wrote in Psalm 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." (cf. Proverbs 6:23; 2 Peter 1:19) God's word is the only light to be used in the search for lost souls. Whenever people substitute other humanly devised methods for reaching the lost, they are unable to find true penitent sinner and will, instead, find those who are looking for something other than God's plan for eternal life (John 6:68).

The search for the coin also included sweeping the floor. The broom could represent God's collection of the saved (members of the Lord's church), each canvassing his own portion of the world and coming into contact with its lost coins. In order to reach the lost, God needs for us to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). He cannot reach the lost if there are no laborers in His field. As Luke 10: 2 states, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Continuing with the broom analogy, let us remember that each strand of the broom head must be attached to the handle, even as Jesus describes the branches being attached to the vine (John 15:5-6). If we do not "abide in" Him, we will most certainly be "thrown away" and "cast into the fire."

We also need to note that the careful search continued until the woman found the coin for which she was searching. In this woman, we see continuing diligence—she refused to stop searching, no matter how many failures she encountered. The woman went to find the coin; she did not wait for it to come to her. Are we willing to be moved by the countless number of lost coins yet in the world, to do all we can to teach the truth to those with whom we come into contact?

This parable's basic lesson deals with the Christian's attitude toward the lost—the value we place on lost souls, compared to the value God places on them. We need to be just as concerned as God is about the lost and show the same diligence in reaching them as the woman showed in searching for the lost coin. Or are we unmoved by the countless number of the world's lost souls with whom we come into contact and who have not been taught the truth in God's word? The woman was not content with nine coins she had; and ultimately, we cannot be content (as God is not) with those who are not Christians.



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The Parable of the Lost Coin

by Christopher Simmons

A parable is a short, fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle. Parables are never meant to be taken for the letter of their word. When taken literally, at face value, the entirety of its meaning is lost.

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

In this parable, Jesus is responding to the complaint raised against Him in verse 2—"This man receives sinners and eats with them." The Scribes and Pharisees held such sinners in great disdain, and they could not grasp Jesus' reason for not turning them away and why He did not recognize the sort of people they were (Luke 7: 39).

On the other hand, this parable is an apology, or defense, to those Jews who perpetrated such an attitude. It also represents Jesus' declaration of good news to those who recognize their lost and undone condition before God. It is a Divine message that God is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3: 9). In Matthew 18: 14, Jesus said, "Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish." God is not willing for even one coin to remain lost in His House and there not be diligent effort made to restore it unto Himself.

The parable is establishing the point that Jesus came to save those who are lost (Luke 19: 10) and that it is the sick—not the healthy—who need a physician (Matthew 9; 12). The parable of the lost coin stresses the value of the lost soul and challenges each of us to see in the soul of the alien sinner the same value that God Himself sees. During the first century, the pious Jews saw no value in those who were known to be sinners and considered them social outcast.

Jesus taught this parable to help us understand the immense value that God sees in each and every lost soul.

The Parable's Elements

The coin mentioned in the parable was a Greek drachma, which by our standards would be worth only twenty cents, but to those of that day, it represented the amount a common laborer earned in a full day. The women had only ten coins, and she lost one of them. What did the coin represent? It could have represented a simple piece of money that belonged to a poor woman and thus was extremely significant to her sustenance. Or, Jewish women often saved up to ten of these coins and joined them together to form a necklace or a hair dress which became a married woman's treasured ornament, worn much like a wedding band is today, perhaps having been passed down from generation to generation. One missing coin would make the ornament essentially worthless. Regardless, the coin was extremely valuable to this woman, and the parable illustrates that value by the extent of her search for it.

The coin obviously represents the world's lost souls; and just as the coin did not recognize that it was lost, many of the world's lost souls never realize (are ignorant of the fact) that they are lost. Yet, God desires their return (Acts 17:23ff). We also need to understand that as long as the coin was lost, it was of no value to the woman. In the same way, a lost sinner cannot be of service to God. However, in both cases, the original owner desires relationship with what is lost (1 Timothy 2:4; 2Peter 3:9). Several other points can be made about the coin. First, just as it would have born Caesar's image (Luke 20:24), even so each lost soul bears the image of its Creator (Genesis 1:26; James 3:9) who jealously desires its return (cf. James 4:5; Colossians 3: 10). Also, like a coin, a child of God can go out of circulation. Even when it is out of circulation, a coin still retains its value.