

Luke 15:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

Analysis

And he spake this parable unto them, saying (εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην, eipen de pros autous tēn parabolē tautēn)—Jesus responds to Pharisaic criticism (v.2) not with argument but with parabolē (παραβολή), a comparison or story set alongside truth to illuminate it. The singular 'parable' introduces three connected stories (lost sheep, lost coin, lost son) as one unified defense of His mission to sinners.

Rather than justify His associations, Jesus reveals the Father's heart. The shift from self-righteous complaint to divine perspective transforms the debate—the question is not whether Jesus should welcome sinners, but whether heaven rejoices when He does. This rhetorical strategy disarms critics by exposing their hearts: Do you share God's joy over repentance, or resent His grace?

Historical Context

Palestinian shepherding culture made the first parable immediately relatable. Jesus spoke in an oral culture where parables were memorable teaching tools that circumvented defensive reactions. The Pharisees had complained about Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners (v.2), a serious charge since table fellowship implied acceptance and intimate relationship. Jesus's response through parable rather than direct confrontation follows rabbinic tradition while subverting their theology of separation.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. When confronted with criticism about extending grace to 'unworthy' people, do you defend yourself argumentatively or reveal God's heart through story and testimony?
2. How does Jesus's method of answering accusation with parable model wisdom in defending gospel ministry?
3. What does the shift from Pharisaic perspective (v.2) to divine perspective (v.3ff) teach about reframing theological debates?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν	δὲ	πρὸς	αὐτοὺς	τὴν	παραβολὴν	ταύτην	λέγων
he spake	And	unto	them	G3588	parable	G3778	saying
G2036	G1161	G4314	G846		G3850		G3004

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