

LOST

When the Dream turns
to a Nightmare

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Introduction

Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him [Jesus]. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Luke 15 v 1-2

I am thirty three years old. I would like to be able to say that in those thirty three years I have made a remarkable impact on human history. But I haven't. According to Facebook I have managed to pick up some friends along the way. I have passed some exams (and failed some too). I can juggle. I have a badge that says I can swim five metres with water wings. Remarkable? Not exactly.

You will be glad to know this book is not about me. This book is all about.

Jesus.



He lived on this earth for about thirty three years. In those thirty three years he turned the world upside down. His short life is the centre point of human history. By any standard he lived a remarkable life. Millions of people around the world follow him and call him King. In this book I want us to work out what all the fuss is about.

We're going to look at one of the stories Jesus told. It's a story that will bring us face to face with the real Jesus. Are you ready to meet him?

The story is very simple. One dad; two sons; living on a farm. But don't be fooled into thinking it is a nice little fairytale. It is explosive. Some people who heard it the day that Jesus first told it became very angry. They were left muttering and grumbling. They found this story deeply offensive. They hated Jesus for it. Hated him so much that they wanted to kill him.

But other people listening in the crowd were blown away by this simple story. It was the most breathtaking thing they had ever heard.

So before we get started, let me give you a warning. This story might make you very angry. Or it might make your heart burn with joy. It is powerful stuff. Are you sure you are ready?

What Jesus is telling us in this story can be summed up in four words:

This man welcomes sinners.

That is the accusation that is chucked at Jesus by the religious leaders of the day. They are not happy. Huge numbers of people are travelling miles to come and listen to what Jesus has to say about God. By itself that would make the religious leaders jealous. But these aren't the good guys who are turning up. Jesus is surrounded by a seriously dodgy crowd of people. They are the sinners, the tax collectors—basically another name for thieves in those days—the

bad boys. And Jesus doesn't seem to be bothered. In fact, he seems pleased to see them. There is no getting away from it. Jesus is making friends with them. He is welcoming sinners.

But Jesus hears this muttering at the back of the crowd and tells this story to answer them.

In a very powerful way Jesus says to them: "Yes, you are right, I do welcome sinners".

This is what Jesus is all about. This is the reason he came.

In a world where acceptance so often depends on how pretty you are, how slim you are, how good you are, how well you keep the rules, how rich you are, how brainy you are, how... whatever you are, here is some good news:

This man welcomes sinners.

In a world where many people feel guilty and worthless and unlovable, here is some good news:

This man welcomes sinners.

Come with me and experience the power and emotion of this surprising story for yourself. Come and meet the man who welcomes sinners.