

Luke 15:1-7 Parable of the Lost Sheep (Part 1)

Preached 2/18/24 at Cloverdale

See Luke 15:1-7

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

³And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

⁴What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? ⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

⁷I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Notice why the Pharisees and scribes are murmuring (complaining) about Jesus.

- They observe the type of people Jesus is hanging around. They were sinners.
- Question – why do you think this would bother them?
 - Pharisees were the keepers of the Law and traditions. They celebrated their position and status in society. They certainly would not have socialized with sinners.
 - Wikipedia -- To associate with tax-collectors and sinners was considered sinful behavior for Jews. Tradition stated: “Let not a man associate with the wicked, not even to bring him to the Torah”
 - Can this attitude happen today? Can we look at sinners and say the same things?
 - It’s like cool kids hanging out with squares or nerds.
 - It hurts our reputation; it seems like we are okay with the sin.
 - Can hanging out with sinners cause a believer to fall and be drawn away from God? Of course. It depends on your purpose for hanging out with them.
 - Is this self-righteous attitude a problem for church people?

Jesus responds to their complaints by telling a parable. The purpose again of the parable is to provide a natural event or story that can reveal a spiritual truth.

Jesus draws them into the parable by asking a question....What do you think of this? If someone has a 100 sheep and one is lost, do they leave the 99 and search for the missing one? And if they find it, will he rejoice over that instance and sheep more than he rejoiced over the 99 which are still there and safe? The answer is yes.

In the natural world, what does this mean?

Sheepfold – a secure walled enclosure. It is a pen where they are kept when not in the pasture with the shepherd. The sheepfold protected the sheep from the outside predators. The duty of shepherds was to protect the herd and bring it to market for shearing. They graze the animals, leading them into areas of good forage, watching out for poisonous plants.

Let's analyze the parable:

⁴What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? ⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

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Notice where the other 99 sheep are left.....in the wilderness. What do we know about being in the wilderness?

- Part of the process and part of the journey before arriving at the Promised Land.
- During this transition, God still provides, it may be unpleasant, and the devil will show up to tempt us.
- We as believers today are not lost if we find ourselves in the wilderness. Watch me. What are we waiting for as believers right now? The return of the Good Shepherd. He has not abandoned the righteous. We know he intends to return.

Notice the search for the one lost sheep doesn't end until the sheep is found. The search is continuous.

How did the sheep become lost in the first place? Since I've got zero experience as a shepherd or dealing with sheep, I conferred with my AI app and it listed some reasons why sheep might become lost from the herd. I wonder, if some of these same reasons apply to people who find themselves lost.

1. **Curiosity:** Sheep are naturally curious animals. Sometimes they may wander off from the herd to explore something that catches their interest.
 - My curiosity caused me to wander off and explore the things of the world.
2. **Disorientation:** In unfamiliar environments or when faced with sudden changes such as weather or terrain, sheep may become disoriented and inadvertently separate from the herd.
 - When I was placed in an unfamiliar setting and away from home, I became disoriented about where I needed to be and what I was supposed to be doing. Ask me about college life, ask me about moving from the city to the suburbs. People can lose their focus due to a change in address.
3. **Predation:** Sheep may stray from the herd to avoid potential predators or in response to perceived threats, such as the presence of a predator nearby.
 - Fear can cause me to quickly do things in my own strength and cause me to leave from trusting in the Good Shepherd, to trusting in myself or someone or something else.

Don't ask me about turning to beer when I was depressed. Don't ask me about running away from relationships and responsibilities and opportunities because of fear of the unknown. Oh, my friends, I've been lost before.

4. **Habitat:** Sheep might find themselves separated from the herd due to features of the landscape, such as steep terrain, or obstacles like fences.
 - Sometimes the environment or obstacles and challenges of life can cause you to separate from the church, from your faith, from the Good Shepherd. What is it in your life that has you running from God and the church?
5. **Herd Dynamics:** Within the herd, there may be social dynamics at play that cause some individuals to become isolated or excluded from the main group.
 - What others thought about me caused me to lose my true identity and rather than identify with the Good Shepherd, I wanted to be accepted by society.
 - Today, this is perhaps the area where most people are separating from the church and from the Good Shepherd. My identity of who I am in the world and to myself becomes more important than my identity in Christ.
 - I become lost in who I belong to because society has given me a different identity. When I'm gay becomes more important than my Christianity, I may be lost. When my political party is more important than the Kingdom, I might become disoriented from the Kingdom. When my denomination and tradition is more important than the Kingdom mission, I might be lost. When success and money and my status become my primary goal, I might be lost. When my identity as a Black American trumps my status and identity in God, then I may be losing myself. There may be some lost folks or folks losing it here right now.
 - This is perhaps the greatest area of concern for our youth who are finding their identity on social media platforms. If you have to find your identity in the world, you are lost in the Kingdom.
6. **Human Interference:** In agricultural settings, human activities such as herding, transportation, or handling can sometimes lead to sheep becoming separated from the herd.
 - Sometimes people can become lost because of how other people handle them. People can get in the way of your progress.
7. **Health Issues:** Sick or injured sheep may lag behind or become separated from the herd due to their condition.
 - My physical limitations caused me to be lost in exercise. My injuries caused me to be almost lost. Ever been church hurt? It can separate you from the Kingdom.

There are some differences between the Luke parable here and the account in Matthew after the lost sheep is found. Notice the following:

- The shepherd can't find the lost sheep at home. He has to take action and search for the sheep.
 - My deer hunting example.
- He doesn't stop searching until he finds the sheep. Note: not everyone who is lost wants to be found.
- Why would he lay the sheep on his shoulders?
 - Sheep is tired and the shepherd is going to help the sheep make it back home.
 - He doesn't just find the lost sheep, that's just part of the process. It might take some effort depending on how far away the sheep has gone, in order to get safely back home. Some sheep need help getting back.
- He is rejoicing along the way before they arrive back home. What are the things which would cause such joy? The rejoicing doesn't start until the sheep is on the shepherd's shoulder.
 - Not just happy that the sheep is found, happy that they are about to head back in the right direction.
 - Example, my grandson just got his driver's permit but wasn't happy because he doesn't have his license. He doesn't understand how joy in the Kingdom works.
- He calls his neighbors and friends together to share in the joy of finding this lost sheep. Why does he want others to rejoice with him?
- The rejoicing is about a sheep that he found, why would his friends care about a lost sheep that doesn't belong to them?
 - Because they are his friends. Friends care about what's important to each other.

Key word -- "likewise" shows that Jesus is comparing this parable to help us understand a Kingdom principle. The same joy the man and others have in the return of the lost sheep, is the same joy that the Kingdom of Heaven has when a sinner follows the steps and is saved.

I don't want to make the mistake of the Pharisees. My church status cannot get in the way of the Kingdom. They had knowledge of the word, but improper understanding and application of the word. How can you memorize scriptures and know so much about the Law and God and still not apply it correctly? Still happens today.

I'm trying to please the Father and make Him proud and bring Him glory. This parable tells us how we can do this. There is a role we have to play in this story in order to properly serve the Kingdom.

Luke 15:1-7 Parable of the Lost Sheep, Part 2

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⁴What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? ⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

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Let’s again show the comparisons:

- The Man – is Jesus.
- The lost sheep is a sinner.
- Jesus continuously searches for lost sinners until they are found.
- Lost sinners cannot save themselves or find their way back home to safety without the Shepherd.
- When the sinner is found, Jesus will lift them up (after they repent and change direction to return home) and carry them along the journey.
 - Remember the footsteps in the sand poem.
- There is rejoicing from the friends of God when they hear this good news. The good news is that the lost sinner is found.
 - The rejoicing is in Heaven. Who is in Heaven that is rejoicing? Angels? The Father?
- The lost sinner needs to repent....this a required part of the process.

How can a sinner find repentance?

- Stop running away from Jesus.
 - Stop trying to do things on your own.
 - Realize you can’t find your way back without Jesus.
- Turn and follow him again.
- Allow Him to lift you up.
- Rejoice along the way. I may not be home yet, but I can rejoice along the way because I’m headed in the right direction and the Good Shepherd is with me.

Sheep cannot survive without a shepherd.

Need constant care and watching, can't leave them unattended.

- Who is the man? Jesus
- Who do the 99 sheep represent? The righteous believers
- Who does the one sheep gone astray represent? Lost souls, us, unbelievers

Since the parable is presented in association with the Kingdom and the process and importance of entering the Kingdom, it must be related to us.

The Man – Jesus, sheep – us, 99 sheep not astray – those who are the righteous and have entered the Kingdom, one sheep astray – those who are lost.

Lesson and understanding from the parable:

- The lost are particularly important to God.
- The purpose of Christ's mission is to seek and save the lost.
- We are to go to where they may be and seek them out and bring them back under the protection of the sheep fold.
- We can't just sit waiting for the lost to come back home. Have to meet them where they are. "it takes action on our part."
- It may take us some effort, out of our way and comfort zone, to reach the lost.
- The sheep left behind, have the comfort of knowing something.....the Shepherd is coming back!

Other observations:

- Sheep can go astray....and sometimes not know it.
- To go astray means to no longer be under the leadership or protection of the Good Shepherd. They are no longer following Christ as a top priority.
- The one gone astray cannot find its way back on its own, someone has to go out and search for it.
- There is more joy and appreciation over recovering something you lost, then in holding on to something you have never lost.

God wants everyone saved, not just the people we like. What is our role then based upon this parable?

Application for Today:

What are the roles in this parable that we have to play? What are we supposed to be doing based upon this?

In the natural, if I love the Shepherd, if I was a friend of the Shepherd, I would either be going out with him to search for the lost sheep, or staying back and protecting the ones left behind.

- Example, what happens when you lose a contact lens? What do people around you that care do? Why? They see the need and respond to the need.

The Roles:

- Shepherd – it's not just Jesus. If we are His disciples we should be following Him to where the lost are. The Gospel is not just about preaching to folks who are already saved. We have to shift from trying to attract sheep who are already found.
 - Don't be a cattle rustler, there are plenty of lost unclaimed sheep out there to reach.
 - They are searching to find the one, or the two....
- Helpers – these shepherds stay and minister and watch over the 99. What do they look like?
 - Sound system team
 - Ushers
 - Teachers
 - Greeters
 - Prayer warriors
 - Singers
 - Musicians
 - Research has shown that certain types of music or sounds might have calming effects on sheep, similar to how some sounds can have a soothing effect on humans. For example, classical music or certain nature sounds might help reduce stress in sheep, particularly in situations like transportation or handling.
 - However, it's essential to note that individual sheep may react differently to music, just like individual humans have different musical preferences. Overall, while sheep may not actively "like" music in the way humans do, they can be affected by it, especially in terms of their stress levels or behavior.
 - You – we all have a role to play
- Friends of the Shepherd – they rejoice and celebrate during and after the return of the lost. When lost folks show up, they rejoice.
 - Heaven
 - Friends of God

I may not need to repent today, but I need to rejoice. You can't be a very good friend of God if you don't love what He loves.

Key point of the parable....while the story is about the lost sheep, he told the parable to reveal a Kingdom mystery to the Pharisees who were self-righteous. They wouldn't be caught dead with a former sinner.

- Jesus points out that this is not how the Kingdom operates. Heaven rejoices and is excited when a sinner repents and shows up. The Pharisees had a problem with this concept. Instead of rejoicing about who Jesus was attracting, they complained. Can this same attitude exist in our churches and fellowships today? Yes.
- Pharisees stayed in church. Knew God and worshipped Him, but were still missing the Kingdom.
- What about you and I? Do you rejoice when people who are different show up? Are you welcoming and do they feel at home, or do you complain in your heart about their presence.

Remember in the scriptures, they didn't say it out loud, they murmured. Jesus could hear and understand their heart whispers.

- What does your heart say about the sinner who repents? How do you feel when people who are not like you show up? Jesus still hears the murmuring of your heart.
- How you want things to be may not be how God wants it to be. Your traditions and your attitude might not be in alignment with the Kingdom.

I need to search for the lost. I can't do it alone. We can't do it alone. We need to work together as a team. Find your role. It is more than just coming to church. Let's get to work.

Caution:

- Not every lost sheep is willing to come back home. Search for the next one.