



World Christian Fellowship

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Lost Sheep Luke 15:3-7

Luke 15:1-2, *Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ²And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”³ So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ ⁷I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.*

Last week in our study on Luke 13:34-35, on the cry of Jesus Christ the compassion of God through Jesus Christ.

The word of God says that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God cries through the Prophet of Ezekiel 3 times that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

God spoke through the prophets many times in the Old and New Testaments.

But one of the things that is true about God that we don't often talk about is His joy.

God wants to share with us the source of His joy.

What brings the Lord joy?

Recovery of the lost. The salvation of sinners.

The Pharisees and the scribes wanted nothing to do with sinners.

Jesus wanted everything to do with sinners.

These two parables draw the Pharisees in. Jesus draws them in by making the first two parables questions.

Jesus draws them in as if they were the person in the story. Drawing them into the experience and the thinking of the main character so that they really play the role in their minds.

V 1-2, they were grumbling and complaining and criticizing Jesus for the kind of people that He received and spent time with.

They always did the same throughout his ministry.

Sinners came to Jesus because He came to seek and save sinners.

When sinners came,

- ✓ He received them,
- ✓ He embraced them,
- ✓ He loved them,
- ✓ He forgave them,
- ✓ He gave them eternal life.

This outraged the religious leaders.

We will look at this story in the following order for us to understand.

1. Lost.
2. Sought.
3. Found.
4. Celebrated.

1. Lost

V 3-4, *So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?*

This is about a shepherd. But we don't find the word Shepherd in this passage at all.

Shepherds.

They were the lowest of the society.

Pharisees thought and taught they were

- the people of the earth,
- the lowlife,
- the scum,
- the unacceptable,
- the outcasts,
- the unclean in the society of the Jews.

They were at the bottom of the all the work in the land of Israel.

Remember what made the appearance of the angels to announce the arrival of Messiah to shepherds so astonishing? Rather than to the religious leaders but to this low life shepherds.

Jesus was always striking at the self-righteous pride of the false leaders of Israel.

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep

This is very offensive to them because He speaks to them as if they were the shepherd in the story.

Which one of you?

That was an offense!

Because they would then have to think of themselves as shepherds. They didn't want any pollution on their bodies and so they stayed away from these kinds of people.

The very thought of putting them in the role of a shepherd would be very offensive to them.

Any Jew with any respectability, no Jew who was a Pharisee or a scribe would ever become a shepherd.

Any Pharisee or scribe even like to think of himself hypothetically as if he were a shepherd.

That would be very demeaning to them.

That would be unclean in their minds.

They knew that God was described several times in the Old Testament as a shepherd.

Psalm 23:1, *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

Isaiah 40:11, *He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.*

Jeremiah 31:10, *“Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, And declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’*

Ezekiel 34:31, *“You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God,” says the Lord God.*

There are times when God is viewed as a shepherd.

The Jewish religious elite would see the analogy that God leading Israel to feed and water, in a safe place. They would understand that.

God protects Israel from enemy’s same way how the shepherd protects his sheep.

They would see the picture of the shepherd that illustrates something of the nature of God.

Moses was a shepherd for a while for his father-in-law when he was in Midian. Even though they would still give honour to God and see a connection there and still give honour to Moses, their great leader, they despised shepherds.

They had established in Jewish society that anybody who was a shepherd was unclean.

According to Jeremias, a historian, they were believed to be dishonest.

Basically, as a lot, they were dishonest.

They were thieves.

They encroached on land that wasn't theirs to feed their sheep.

Because they took a role that put them at the lowest level, they tended to be the lowest level of people who had the least expectation for themselves and they tended to live up to their reputation.

Certainly, no Pharisee would ever, ever be a shepherd, nor would he like to even conceive of himself in a hypothetical sense as a shepherd.

But they can't help that because Jesus has put them in the story by the rhetorical question. Now, whether they are offended or not, they are in the story. Since they are part of the story they must deal with the ethical point of this story.

V 4, *“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them,*

Commonly the families in Israel had up to as many as fifteen sheep. These are the poor people, living in village life.

These are not wandering shepherds who roam and have no village and no home.

Why?

V 6 indicates that the shepherd goes home to his village.

The shepherd in the story is not wanderer from one place to another but a poor shepherd from a village.

How come he had 100?

If a family had only 15 sheep or so?

In the village they would consolidate their sheep in one great flock, and they would have some shepherds who would take care of their sheep.

They didn't like to hire a shepherd from outside the village or outside the extended family because, as Jesus points out in John 10, hirelings tend to destroy.

Hirelings tend to kill.

Hirelings tend to steal.

They would pick somebody who was at the lowest level of their social structure in the village and who needed the work. Who didn't mind that it was an unclean kind of outcast job and they would hire them.

Also, it was safer to hire somebody in the extended family because that person had a vested interest in the value of the sheep.

So, here is a hypothetical flock of a 100 sheep being cared for by two or three shepherds. A hundred sheep, you had had to have two or three shepherds.

One of the sheep is lost.

There was one very dominant rule about shepherding established those days.

You don't lose sheep.

That was the big one.

If one goes away, you find it and you bring it back

- alive or
- dead or
- you bring back a piece

But you don't come back without a sheep.

Everybody who hear the story knew that.

The Pharisees knew that.

Shepherding was making sure that you took care of those valuable sheep. The one you lost may have belonged to a family who only had two. Shepherd took on that responsibility very seriously.

2. Sought

Jesus asked this question.

V 4, *“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?”*

No one is going to say, we got ninety-nine left so let us go back.

Everybody knew what a shepherd's responsibility was.

The sheep, during the night, would be in the village in a pen. But during the day, in the morning, they would go out into the open pasture and they would feed, and they would bring them back at night. But when you lose one in the open pasture, you are called to an immediate responsibility.

Shepherd don't go back and come the next day. They go look for the sheep and leave the sheep in the pasture with the other shepherds.

What man among you would do any different than that?

Jesus knows the answer to that question, and they all know the answer to the question.

The shepherd must leave immediately.

This is his duty and his responsibility.

V 4, *“until he finds it.”*

You bring back

- Alive, or
- Dead, or
- Piece of the sheep.

The shepherd goes after it.

Everybody would say, of course, he goes after it.

Of course, everybody knows that.

No man among us would do anything different than that. If we were shepherds, God forbid, that's exactly what we would do because that's what shepherds do. And no sacrifice would be too great and no time and effort, enterprise would be too demanding.

You go and you find that lost sheep.

Lost sheep get the attention of the shepherd.

Sheep – Characteristics:

I had spoken to you about sheep while preaching about John chapter 10.

Two main characteristics I will point it out.

- a) Hopeless
- b) Helpless

Sheep are stupid.

- ❖ Only animal has no sense of direction.
- ❖ Only animal can't reach to the water even if its in 10 meters range.
- ❖ They don't know when to stop eating.
- ❖ Dirty animal.
- ❖ There is no grass they start eating mud along the grass.
- ❖ They are defenceless.
- ❖ Sheep has no self-defence mechanism.
- ❖ If they fall over on their side, they can't get up by themselves.
- ❖ Die of exhaustion, from dehydration.
- ❖ When the sheep afraid the lie down and die.
- ❖ When the sheep fall down, they cant get up on their own.

The sheep become so despondent and discouraged. The Pharisees knew all that.

They knew the shepherd had to go and do whatever was necessary. It wouldn't be easy. Sheep look a lot like rocks. A dirty sheep is about the same colour as rocks in the land of Israel.

So, the Pharisees and the scribes would buy into the story and they would understand the necessity of the action that the shepherd took.

3. Found

V 5, And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

Please do note the verse starts with "When," not as "if"

Why?

Because Shepherd had no other option except to find it!

This shepherd is not lazy.

This shepherd is not afraid.

He understands the wilderness.

He spends his days out there.

He understands the animals and he seek until he finds it, no matter how rigorous it.

When he finds it, he lays it on his shoulders.

The shepherd takes the sheep which weighs anywhere between 25 to 35 kgs puts its belly on his shoulders. Pull four legs together ties with a rob and puts that right is front of him.

The sheep when its fall down if you take the sheep and put them in their legs they die because the blood flow.

Note the shepherd carrying the sheep on his shoulders not painfully or miserably but rejoicing!

The shepherd is very happy, so he is joyful because he found the sheep.

Everyone who hears this story understand that too.

The shepherd picks it up the sheep and puts it on the back of his neck and rejoices, even though he knows the hard part is ahead.

It's one thing to look for the sheep,
It's something else, having found the sheep, to go back over the same track, carrying the sheep.

But he is rejoicing as he starts the hard part, going back home where the rest of the flock has kept.

- ✓ God is not a reluctant Saviour.
- ✓ God is a relentless Saviour.

- ❖ He weeps over the lost.
- ❖ He weeps through the eyes of the Old Testament prophets.
- ❖ He weeps through the eyes of His own Son.
- ❖ He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.
- ❖ He does rejoice in the salvation of sinners.

This is heaven's joy.

We're going to sing a new song.

Revelation 5:9-13, *And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ¹⁰And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." ¹¹Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*

Heaven is going to sound like as it's an eternal celebration of the recovery of the lost.

We need to be understanding heaven's joy.

It should be our joy!

We should rejoice when we find the lost!

4. Celebrated

V 6, *And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'*

This is a village.

After a very demanding journey over the rugged land bearing the full weight of that sheep, he is finally home.

The Pharisees and scribes would know the scene well.

- They lived all over the land and the villages and towns.
- They would know he did the right thing.
- They would also understand his joy.
- They would also understand the celebration when he came back.

The family and the village would have been waiting, wondering if he would find the sheep and in what condition he would find the sheep. The old men in the village, typically would sit somewhere in the centre of the village at the end of the day and rehearse all the stories and tell all the tales and speak of the things that happened that day.

These would be people who shared in the ownership of the flock, perhaps. They wanted to hear that the sheep was found. That was the news they longed to hear. It would become a

wonderful event of joy in the village when the shepherd showed up with the sheep.

At this point, Jesus has them completely absorbed in His story, just like we are!

They have bought into the ethical responsibility of the shepherd because they are people of high ethics. The shepherds are supposed to do their duty and do what's right.

Application

Whatever they understood about the story itself and the ethics of the story, they were about to get the theological and the Christological.

V 7, I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

Very clear implication and application.

It was just too obvious.

The whole story is about the joy of God when a lost sinner is sought and found and recovered.

How is it that God can be so eager?

How is it that God can be so desirous?

How is it that God can be so concerned to seek and save the lost?

You, the religious elite of Pharisees and scribes, who claim to be God's representatives on earth only despise the lost?

How can that be?

The religious leaders were far far away from the heart of God. They despise the lost whereas God rejoices over them. They don't want to go near the lost whereas God sought, finds, and carries them back.

How is it that you can respect the shepherd, an unclean shepherd, who goes out to find an unclean animal and bring it back?

How is it that you can take the lofty, ethical posture on the fact that he did the right thing and condemn Me for rescuing eternal souls?

How misrepresented are you?

You are far from the heart of God and you are caught up in superficiality and triviality while souls all around you are perishing.

Matthew 9:35-36, *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* ³⁶ *But when He saw the multitudes,*

He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

Jesus was teaching and doing His miracles and delivering people from illnesses and diseases. He was moved with compassion because He saw all the people as "sheep without a shepherd".

- ✓ Nobody comes to find them,
- ✓ Nobody to rescue them,
- ✓ No one come and pick them up out of their hopeless, helpless, wounded, nearly lifeless condition and
- ✓ No one carry them back.

What hypocrites the scribes and Pharisees were?

They know nothing of God.

They know nothing of shepherding.

Congratulating an outcast shepherd for doing what is the rightful duty of a shepherd to save the life of an unclean, stupid animal while condemning the Great Shepherd for rescuing unclean sinners.

The sad reality is, in Israel, as everywhere, like people, like priests.

They had no shepherds.

They had no leaders.

They knew nothing of the heart of God, nothing of divine shepherding. In fact, they were so far from God that when He sent His own Great Shepherd, they killed Him.

Christology:

God in Christ is the Shepherd who seeks the lost.

God incarnate in Christ is the Shepherd who seeks the lost.

Luke 19:10, *"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

It is God in Christ who not only seeks but finds.

Apostle Peter says it is the Great Shepherd of our souls who comes after us and finds us.

It is God in Christ who bears the full burden of restoration.

That picture of God incarnate in Christ, putting the sheep on His back and carrying the sheep all the way home through the darkness is the Christological centre of the story.

It is Christ who seeks the lost.

It is Christ who finds whomever He seeks because He knows His sheep.

It is Christ who bears the full burden of their restoration.

The very act of the shepherd was making a tremendous sacrifice, the pain, suffering, to bear the full weight of the sheep back home we can see Jesus Christ bears the full weight of our recovery, the full weight of our restoration.

Jesus finds us when we are lost, lonely, hopeless, and helpless and He comes to us, picks us up, puts us on His back and there was nothing the sheep could do or did do.

John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

John 10:14-15, *I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ¹⁵As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

Isaiah 53:4-6, *Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

All of us like sheep have gone astray.

All of us has turned to our own way.

But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

He bears it all.
It's all of grace.
It's all of Christ.

All we can do is acknowledge our lostness, our helplessness, our hopelessness and yield in faith to the Great Shepherd who picks us up.

- ✓ The Shepherd does the seeking,
- ✓ The Shepherd does the finding,
- ✓ The Shepherd does the lifting,
- ✓ The Shepherd does the carrying,
- ✓ The Shepherd does the restoring, and
- ✓ The Shepherd leads the celebration.

When we think about Christianity and we think about a symbol. You might think about a cross. Today, we identify any one symbol in Christianity it would be a cross.

But it wasn't always that way in Christian history. In early Christianity believers didn't use a cross. Occasionally they used a sign of a fish but that was more in the Gentile world.

Early Christians used the image of a shepherd with a sheep on his neck.

That was the earliest Christian symbol!

Even today if you visit Israel you will find one thing appear much more in stores is a little wooden carving of shepherd with a sheep around his neck.

The main point of the story.

V 7, I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

- He's not rejoicing because only of the work of Christ.
- He's not rejoicing only because a sinner is delivered from sin.

The whole joy of heaven is predicated on the fact that God is filled with joy.

Why do we evangelize?

Satisfy the work of Christ to bring joy to the sinner.

For beyond anything we are motivated by the fact that we can be instruments in bringing joy to God.

The older you get, the longer is your track record of disappointments. You think God must be unhappy with me. I must make God sad every day. But here, I can participate in the joy of God and I can not only make God rejoice, but all of Heaven rejoice if I allow myself to be an instrument through which the Great Shepherd recovers the lost.

What a glorious way to view your life!

This is our Great Commission.

"There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

That last line is pure sarcasm.

The sinner who repents is like the sheep: helpless, understands his helplessness, danger, weakness, need, desperation, and recognizes only a hope for life and a hope for rescue and trusts himself into the arms of the Great Shepherd, and rests fully on His back until He brings him home.

That's in stark contrast to the ninety-nine righteous persons who don't need to repent.

They think already holy.

What a privilege it is for us to participate in the divine recovery process?

The Pharisees and the scribes had nothing to do with the purposes of God, nothing to do with the work of God.

They were deceived into thinking they needed no repentance.

They are the ninety-nine who are the self-righteous.

They are the ninety-nine self-made legalists who know nothing of God.

They are saying with the Pharisee in **Luke 18:11-12**, *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You*

that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

On the other hand, there are those who are lost.

They know they are lost.

They are desperate.

They are carried home.

They become the tools by which the Great Shepherd continues to rescue other lost sheep.

This is our high calling and heaven's high joy.

If you are one of those lost sheep, it's time for you to cry out to the Good Shepherd. Call out to Him, ask Him to be merciful and to pick you up and carry you to the Father.

If you are a Christian but your priorities are all messed up, it is time for you to ask God to give you the grace and wisdom so that you will spend rest of your life for the purpose of finding the lost to bring joy to God and all in heaven!