





The Lost Sheep

Luke 15:4-7

Parables of Jesus

Jesus is teaching the people, and all the publicans and sinners came to hear Jesus. The publicans were tax collectors, and they were not liked by the people. Many of them became rich because they were dishonest in their business dealings. The sinners were people who were doing things that were looked down on by the community. But these people all wanted to hear Jesus; they were drawn to him and may have known they needed his mercy.

The Pharisees were around Jesus all the time, but not because they wanted to hear his teachings. They heard them but they did not understand them (Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:13). They were around Jesus because they felt threatened by him. They knew the people liked him, and they thought the people would believe on Jesus and then the Romans would take away the authority of the Pharisees (John 11:48). They followed Jesus and listened to him because they were always hoping to find something that would give them a reason to arrest him. The Pharisees were building a case against Jesus.

The Pharisees and scribes were complaining that Jesus let the sinners come hear him, and he even went to eat with them. He would go to their homes and eat and the Pharisees thought this was wrong. They looked down on these people and did not care about people coming into the kingdom.

Jesus responds to them by telling them three parables about lost things. A lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son.

Jesus asks,

If a man has one hundred sheep, and loses one of them, will he leave the ninety-nine out in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost? Will he look for it until he finds it?

Discuss:

Would you do this?

How would you know if one was missing? That is a lot of sheep.

This shepherd must have been a very good shepherd. He would have to count his sheep every day and know them individually.

He would have to be intimately involved in the day-to-day activities of his sheep to notice that one was missing.

When he finds the sheep, he carries it on his shoulders and rejoices.



The Lost Sheep

Discuss:

This shepherd really loves his sheep. He is a strong shepherd; he picks up the sheep and carries it on his shoulders.

Why did he not let it walk?

Was he afraid it would get lost, or stumble?

Or is he just so glad to find it that he lovingly carries it?

He comes home, calls all of his friends and neighbors, and says rejoice with me! I found my sheep that was lost.

Discuss:

This shepherd really cares about his sheep.

He is throwing a party with his friends and neighbors because he found his sheep.

We might think, he has one hundred. He only lost one, it's not a big deal.

It's okay, he still has ninety-nine left.

Or, what about the ninety-nine he left behind? Are they okay?

Then Jesus said, just like this, there is joy in heaven over *one* sinner that repents, more than over the ninety-nine just persons who do not need to repent.

It is commonly believed that the ninety-nine are already saved; they are in the kingdom, and they are fine left in the wilderness, and this is one possible interpretation of this story.

But wait. Look closer at the story.

Look at where the shepherd left the ninety-nine. He left them in the wilderness. This word in the original Greek means solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited. Would the sheep be safe out there? What about wild animals? It doesn't say he left them with someone else. All it says is he left them in the wilderness.

Throughout scripture, the wilderness does not represent the promised land. It represents a time of trial, and it is not a place of security. It is not a destination, it is merely a place of transit to get to a better place.

It also says that these ninety-nine just, or righteous, persons had no need of repentance.

Who has no need of repentance? Doesn't everyone need repentance?

"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

Could it be that the ninety-nine were the Pharisees? Is Jesus using a twist here; based on the Pharisees view of themselves? Could Jesus be using sarcasm? They thought they were the most righteous (Mark 7:6-8). The Pharisees thought they were better than these sinners when actually the Pharisees were in pride and they were the ones that were in the most need of repentance.



The Lost Sheep

Who is the lost sheep?

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...”

We are the lost sheep. You are the lost sheep. Each one of us, individually.

Where did the shepherd go after he found the sheep?

Notice that the shepherd did not go back to the other sheep in the wilderness. He did not take this sheep and add it to the fold.

He took this lost sheep and brought it home.

Could it be that the ninety-nine were still in the wilderness? Could it be that the ninety-nine who were “just and righteous” were actually quite lost? Maybe they were not truly just or righteous.

One of the meanings of the original Greek word for **just** or **righteous** is:

“of those who seem to themselves to be righteous, pride themselves to be righteous, who pride themselves in their virtues, whether real or imagined.”

Could it be that these ninety-nine represent the Pharisees, who were still in the wilderness and not entering the kingdom of heaven?

But the one who was lost, and now found - he was brought home. He has entered the kingdom of God.

Jesus in the Story



Some people think that Jesus came only to save humanity. That he would not have died if it were just one, or “just me.” Some would say, of course he died for our sins, but it was a group effort; he knew by his crucifixion that he was saving mankind.

But, that theory does not seem to line up with this parable.

This parable shows the importance of the ONE. Our shepherd, Jesus, was so focused on *the one* that he was willing to go to great lengths to find the **one** and bring it **home**.

This is YOU. YOU are the one. He searches for you, and rejoices over you. He carries you, and all of heaven holds a party when ONE sinner repents and comes into the kingdom.



Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

33. The Door

1. Who comes in the door?
2. Who do the sheep follow?
3. Will the sheep follow a stranger? Why or why not?
4. What does it say we will recognize if we know Jesus?

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

34. Who Is My Neighbor?

Read Matthew 25:35-40

1. Jesus said, I was hungry and you gave me?
2. I was thirsty and you gave me?
3. I was a stranger and?
4. I was sick and you?
5. I was in prison and you?
6. When we help others, who are doing it for?

Matthew 22:37-39

...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

35. The Wicked Servant

1. How many times did Jesus say we need to forgive? Explain.
2. What did the master give to the man who owed a very large amount of money?
3. What did that man do when his worker owed him a little bit of money?
4. What does God say he will do if we do not forgive others?

Mark 11:26

But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.

36. The Lost Sheep

1. How many sheep did the shepherd leave behind?
2. Where did he leave the other sheep?
3. Where did he take the one lost sheep after he found it?
4. What did Jesus say happens in heaven when someone repents?

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.