

A Journey with Christ the Messiah

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Luke 15:1-7

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing a series that I have entitled *A Journey with Christ the Messiah*. In the last several weeks we have embarked on a journey through both the Old and the New Testaments with the purpose of discovering Christ the Messiah that is written there. We have looked at Old Testament prophecies and saw Jesus fulfilling all of the Messianic prophecies concerning Him. We have looked at His birth, His miracles, and His seven "I AM" proclamations. We have examined His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead and the significance of those events.

In the next few weeks, I would like to look at Jesus' teachings through the parables that He taught during His ministry and try to apply them to our lives. This morning we are going to look at **The Parable of the Lost Sheep**.

Among the many metaphors used throughout the Bible to describe God's relationship with people, one of the most common is a Shepherd and his sheep. David first wrote "**The Lord is my Shepherd**" in **Psalm 23** and Jesus often used this imagery, identifying himself as the Good Shepherd.

Now, I don't really know if that's a compliment. If you ask a classroom of students, "If you could be any animal you want, which animal would you be?" I doubt that any of them would say a sheep.

I was able to find a Bighorn Sheep and a Ram for a mascot, but I don't think you will likely find a sports team with a sheep as their mascot.

Can you imagine the **Royals changing their name to the Kansas City Sheep**?

How about the **University of Missouri being called the MU Lambs** or **Kansas State University being called the K State Ewes**?

People will even use the word sheep as an insult, implying that a sheep is a person that is just a follower and doesn't think for himself.

Yet, these are the creatures to which Christians are most often compared in the Bible. Perhaps it's because they naturally flock together. Sheep are very social creatures and enjoy living in groups. Or maybe it's because of how worrisome they can be. A sheet of paper blown by the wind will frighten them. A thunderstorm may throw them into a panic. Or possibly it's their relationship with their shepherd. Sheep are able to identify human faces and voices, remembering them for years. They won't follow just anyone, but they will hear and obey the voice of their Shepherd.

One day, Jesus was sitting and teaching, probably in a synagogue. As usual, a crowd started forming around him. But Jesus not only drew decent folks and respectable citizens; He also drew tax collectors, street walkers, and other notorious sinners around Him. They were drawn to Jesus like a magnet. As if on cue, the Pharisees start grumbling. How dare he socialize with such sinners! In response, Jesus told this short story about a little lost lamb:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Luke 15:1-7 (NASB)

15 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.
2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”
3 So He told them this parable, saying, 4 “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ 7 I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

As we prepare to continue this journey, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Let's continue the journey!

As with all of his parables, Jesus tells this story to illustrate some spiritual truth. Jesus understood the power of a simple story. Stories are capable of building a bridge from one heart to another so that truth can then walk across it. As we ponder this pint-sized parable, I'd like to point out three parallels that **we all share** with this little lost lamb. First, the sheep was lost.

BODY:

I. THE SHEEP WAS LOST.

Sheep have an instinctive tendency to wander. The sheep nibbles on a tuft of green grass, and when it finishes, it looks ahead to the next tuft of green grass then nibbles on that one. Then another and another. The next thing you know the sheep has nibbled itself far away from the flock.

The Bible says,

Isaiah 53:6 (NASB)

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

ILLUSTRATION:

Something happens the longer a sheep is away from its shepherd. Something a sheep named Shrek learned firsthand. Shrek was a Merino breed sheep living in South Island, New Zealand. In 2004 Shrek escaped from his enclosure and lived for six years away from his owner by hiding in local caves.

The Merino breed does not shed wool each year as most other breeds do. During this time his fleece grew without anyone there to shear it. When he was finally found and shaved, his fleece weighed an amazing **sixty pounds**. Most sheep have a fleece weighing just under ten pounds. After six years, Shrek carried six times the regular weight of his fleece simply because he was away from his shepherd.

Shrek became famous in 2010 when he was finally found. When Shrek was sheared, it was broadcasted on New Zealand's national television for all to witness.

We're not all that different from Shrek. The longer we are away from our Shepherd and the farther we get from God's paths, the more weight we're going to accumulate in life—a weight we don't have to bear. We aren't weighed down by wool, but we are burdened with baggage. Haven't you been known to pick up a few bags?

A suitcase of guilt. A sack of discouragement. You drape a duffel bag of weariness on one shoulder and a satchel of grief on the other. Add on a backpack of doubt, an overnight bag of loneliness, and a trunk full of fear. Then there's the heaviest baggage of all—sin. You carry a Samsonite suitcase full of hatred, pride, jealousy, anger, selfishness, and lust. Pretty soon you're lugging more luggage than a baggage-claim carousel. No wonder we're so tired by the end of the day. Bearing all those burdens is exhausting.

That's why we marvel at the words of Christ:

Matthew 11:28 (NASB)

²⁸ "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

When Shrek was found, a professional sheep shearer took care of Shrek's fleece in twenty-eight minutes. Shrek's sixty pound burden was finally removed. As our Shepherd, Jesus offers to do the same for us—to bear the burdens, we were never meant to carry. He does so because he loves you. That's the second similarity between us and the lost lamb in Jesus story. Yes, the lamb was lost; but, also the lamb was loved.

II. THE SHEEP WAS LOVED.

Because the shepherd loved that one lost lamb, he left the ninety-nine other sheep and set out in search of the one that was lost. That's what love does.

ILLUSTRATION:

It reminds me of this CEO for a large company that needed to call one of his employees about an urgent problem. He dialed the employee's home telephone number and was greeted with a child's whispered, "Hello?"

Irritated at the inconvenience of having to talk to a child, the boss asked, "Is your Daddy home?"

"Yes," whispered the small voice.

"May I talk with him?" he asked.

The small voice whispered, "No."

So, the boss asked, "Is your Mommy there?"

"Yes," came the answer.

"May I talk with her?"

Again, the small voice whispered, "No."

Knowing that it was not likely that a young child would be left home alone, he asked, "Is there anyone there besides you?"

"Yes," whispered the child, "a policeman."

Curious, the boss asked, "May I speak with the policeman?"

"No, he is busy," whispered the child.

"Busy doing what?" asked the boss.

"Talking to Daddy and Mommy and the Fireman," came the whispered answer.

Growing concerned and even worried as he heard what sounded like a helicopter in the background, the boss asked, "What is going on there?"

The child answered, "The search team just landed the hello-copper!"

Finally, he demanded. "What are all these people doing at your house?"

Still whispering, the little voice replied, "They are looking for me!"

That little boy was loved. And because he was loved, they were looking for him. The lost sheep was loved. And because she was loved, she was looked for. You are loved. And because you are loved, Jesus is looking for you.

Jesus once described his purpose for coming into the world like this:

Luke 19:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Even though it sounds cliché, Jesus loves you. You're the apple of his eye. You're the ice crystal in his Dr. Pepper. If he had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If he had a wallet, your photo would be in it. Jesus entered our world in search of your soul. He chose the nails and the cross to win your heart. Love compelled him to look for what was lost.

Logic says, stay with the ninety-nine. It's only one sheep. As Mr. Spock put it in Star Trek, "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one." That's what logic says. But love says otherwise. Jesus could have had a thousand sheep or million sheep and He still would have gone after the one. Because that's what love does!

Jesus doesn't love planets or populations; He loves people. He doesn't love multitudes; he loves men. As Saint Augustine once put it, "He loves each one of us, as if there were only one of us." So like us, the sheep in Jesus story was **lost, loved**, and finally **found**.

III. THE SHEEP WAS FOUND.

Notice what happened when the shepherd found the lost lamb. He didn't scold the sheep or take a whip and drive it back to the flock. Rather, he celebrated that he had found his lost sheep. Take another peek at the climax of this short story:

Luke 15:6 (NASB)

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

In case the point of the parable wasn't apparent, Jesus states plainly,

Luke 15:7 (NASB)

⁷I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Jesus doesn't just make this point and move on. He wanted his listeners' to underline it, highlight it, and mark it bold. He told two more tales immediately following this one, each with a similar plot.

Next was a parable about a woman who had ten silver coins and lost one. She sweeps the whole house and searches every corner until she finds it. In the end she invites her neighbors over to celebrate.

Then there's the parable of the lost son; the prodigal boy who wastes his inheritance on wild living. But once he comes to his senses and returns home, his father throws a party celebrating his return.

You can relate, can't you? Maybe you've never lost a sheep, a silver coin, or a son, but how many times have you lost your keys, the television remote, or your cell-phone?

For Me, my big loss is when I have misplaced my pocket knife! I retrace your steps. I search every nook and cranny. I look at every square inch of the shop. I tear out the couch cushions, rummage through my coat pockets, and look under the sofa. When I finally find the knife, I am excited and exhale. **Don't you?** You don't do it, but you feel like throwing a party!

Jesus said,

Luke 15:7 (NASB)

⁷I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

In the book *Just Like Jesus*, Max Lucado writes, “Why do Jesus and his angels rejoice over one repenting sinner? Can they see something we can’t? Do they know something we don’t? Absolutely. They know what heaven holds. They’ve seen the table, and they’ve heard the music, and they can’t wait to see your face when you arrive. Better still, they can’t wait to see you. When you arrive and enter the party, something wonderful will happen. A final transformation will occur. You will be just like Jesus. Drink deeply from 1 John 3:2...

1 John 3:2 (NASB)

² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

We have not yet been shown what we will be in the future. But we know that when Christ comes again, we will be like him. Of all the blessings of heaven, one of the greatest will be you! You will be God’s magnum opus, his work of art. The angels will gasp. God’s work will be completed. At last, you have a heart like his. You will love with a perfect love. You will worship with a radiant face. You’ll hear each word God speaks. Your heart will be pure, your words will be jewels, your thoughts will be treasures. You will be just like Jesus.”

CONCLUSION:

Maybe being compared to sheep isn’t so bad, after all. Being lost is no fun, but being loved, looked for, and found makes it all worth it. Even Jesus was known as the Lamb of God. And who wouldn’t want to be like Jesus?

If you’re feeling spiritually lost today, you can be found. Jesus loves you and came to earth looking for you. Unlike the lost sheep, though, you know the way home. Trust in Jesus as the Lamb of God who died for your sins, then accept him as the Shepherd of your soul. Follow him and he’ll lead you safely home.

Jesus sent his disciples out with a final commission just before He ascended to heaven. That commission was...

Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

That is our commission today as Christians to tell others how to be found. I encourage all of you to teach others all that Christ has commanded us from the scriptures.

If you have not observed His commandment to follow Him and be baptized for the remission of sins, I encourage you to let Christ transform your sinfulness into righteousness and let Him carry your burden for you. If you’ll do that right now, then the angels in heaven will be rejoicing with us.

He is Lord!