



A Gentle Shepherd

Jan 29, 2017

Scripture Passage: Luke 15:1-7

Introduction:

Luke chapter 15 is one of my favorite chapters. It contains three important parables, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost prodigal son. All three stories have three things in common: They were all lost, they were all found, and there was a great joy when they were found. Even though the lost sheep and lost coin contain similar theme, the prodigal son differs greatly from the other stories. The father of the prodigal son does not go after his lost prodigal son. While the sheep accidentally gets lost, the prodigal son willfully, rebelliously gets lost! This is crucial information. These parables will teach us when to go after the lost, and when not to. Let us see the lost sheep parable today.

Before we move into the lost sheep parable, let us look at the reason why Jesus, our Lord spoke these parables in the first place.

Luke 15:1, 2.

1 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."

Pharisees mean separated ones! They were purists. They not only tried to practice righteousness in an ostentatious, showy manner, but they also tried to separate themselves from those who were not practicing the law the way they practiced. They were very contemptuous toward the Gentiles, and also with tax collectors, and Publicans. They also separated themselves from Jews who did not live like them. We have modern day Christian also like that. We have nothing to do with people who drink, or smoke, or curse or indulge in a sinful lifestyle. But Jesus, our Lord sought after them. He came to seek and save that which was lost. A doctor is needed for a sick person and not for the healthy one. Allow sinners to come near you because we are all sinners.

Jesus seemed to attract sinners and tax collectors, and the Pharisees were shocked to see him eating and talking with them! Jesus was indeed the friend of sinners! We must send signals to such people, "in spite of your sinful lifestyle I still love you! We should not love their sinful life, but we must love them as our fellow human beings! They are no different than us! They are sinners just like us! You don't have to follow them. But if they come to you, don't run away from them. Show them the love of Christ!

Jesus saw the Pharisees grumbling to one another behind His back. They did not have the guts to tell Him straight about their feelings. We do this often in the church also. If we don't like



A Gentle Shepherd

Jan 29, 2017

some behavior, we talk behind that person's back only. We do not want to let that person know. Tell me, how will that person correct himself if he or she does not know what he is doing? But Jesus knew everything! He did not get angry immediately. We all react in a self-righteous, defensive manner. Jesus immediately taught them through a simple real life example,

Luke 15:3-6. 3So 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!’

Jesus has spoken so much about sheep! John chapter 10 is another precious chapter in the Scripture. It is all about the relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. In that chapter, the shepherd calls out his sheep by name like his pet friend and leads out. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, but the hirelings will not. No one can pluck them out of His hand! They know their shepherd's voice. They will not follow a stranger!

We have a nice **YouTube concerning sheep recognizing only the shepherd's voice, and not a stranger's!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e45dVgWgV64>

I am sure, you all may have seen many paintings of Jesus with sheep, especially a sheep on the shoulder! Sheep is a very soft, gentle species. They cannot survive on their own. They need shepherds to watch over them and take care of their needs. They are gentle animals, yet very foolish! They look at only one thing: green pastures. They just put their head down and go after them. So it is easy for them to go astray. We also do the same thing! We go after the grass of money, power, fame, success, pleasure, and we drift away, forget our shepherd, and get lost in the wilderness!

Sheep – Let’s see their character –

They are not rebellious animals. They do not willfully rebel and go their way. The minute the shepherd calls them, they get back to the fold, return obediently. We confuse a genuinely lost sheep with a rebellious prodigal son. We cannot go after the rebellious, stiff-necked people. Just like the father of the prodigal son, we may have to let him go and make him learn his lessons the hard way.



A Gentle Shepherd

Jan 29, 2017

We must not be like the rebellious ones. We must become like the sheep, - obedient, gentle, and abide in the shepherd's love. We must hear His voice, obey, and follow Him.

It is too easy for a sheep to go astray. If the shepherd ignores the sheep too long, they may get lost, or wild animals may attack them and try to eat them.

In this story, the sheep got lost not only because of its own foolishness, but also because of the negligence, and carelessness of the shepherd. He did not pay attention. The shepherd's focus and interest were on something else! The sheep was just a dollar sign for them and they were not their favorite pet.

Bible has a lot to say about such foolish, selfish shepherds:

Ezekiel 34:1-10.

1. Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,
2. "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?"
3. "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock.
4. "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them.
5. "They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered.
6. "My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; my flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them."
7. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:
8. "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock;
9. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:



A Gentle Shepherd

Jan 29, 2017

10. 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand my sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver my flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.'"

But the shepherd in this story was not that bad. He was indeed a good shepherd, but he was little careless in losing that one sheep. He repented of his mistake, and went after that sheep with burden because he loved that sheep so much!

God wants only people who love Him to feed His sheep. Only people who love Jesus will love His sheep also.

Please notice Luke 15:4 verse again.

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

The minute the shepherd realized that one sheep was missing, he left the rest in the open pasture! In Mathew 18:12 it says that he left the sheep on the hill side, and then he went to look for his sheep. So from that phrase, we could tell that the sheep that was lost was not that far away from the fold and the shepherd was all by himself. He cannot abandon the 99 sheep completely. Wild animals would smell them and come after them. So while he was looking for his lost sheep, he kept a watchful eye on other sheep!

The shepherd must have gone through every crevice and corner and kept calling its name. After much effort, he found the sheep, and he carried that sheep on his shoulder. Probably the sheep could not walk anymore. A very emotional, touching part of the story!

Luke Chapter 15 Verse 5 and 6 tells us that the shepherd was rejoicing while he carried that sheep, he not only rejoiced within himself because he saved that from the jaws of death, when he came home, he called his neighbors and friends, to rejoice with him! There was so much joy over that one lost sheep in that village!

Jesus compared that joy with the heavenly joy!

Luke 15:7. 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.

There will be tremendous joy over one sinner who repents because God plucked that lost sheep from the jaws of Satan and death! But the shepherd did not rejoice over the other 99 sheep



A Gentle Shepherd

Jan 29, 2017

that stayed with him obediently. Likewise, the father of prodigal son did not rejoice over the older son, but he really jumped for joy over his repented prodigal younger son. Why?

This was the reason that father gives:

Luke 15:31-32. "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

We rejoice over a person who recovers from cancer. We don't rejoice over normal healthy people.

We rejoice over people who were plucked out of death.

I.e. The coal miners who were rescued after 3 days of struggle!

Conclusion:

God's love is a seeking love. He came down to seek and save that which was lost! God's love is a protective, caring love.

God's love is eternal. He will never leave us nor forsake us!

Are you getting lost? Where is your mind and heart now? God says, set your mind on heavenly things above, not on things below on earth! God also said, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added into you. But we are saying No! We are running after green pastures of money, a better job, better house, more gadgets, more knowledge, and more pleasure. There is nothing wrong in seeking after these green pastures, but when we forget about our shepherd and run after these things constantly, we become more like godless people, and we do drift away and get lost! Only when we face some suffering in our life, we remember our big Shepherd! Why? Why don't we walk together spiritually, why don't we follow our great shepherd and eat from the green pastures that He provides? It is so easy to get lost in this world! Bow down and examine yourself! Where are you right now?

Pastor Daniel Israel