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Lost Sheep

“Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!”
(Luke 15: 6*)

One Sabbath day Jesus was invited to dinner at the home of a religious leader. During the feast, He took the opportunity to share some parables with His host and the other guests. The stories were Jesus' way of revealing secrets of Kingdom living. The point of the stories was to give good advice on how to conduct one-self with others. If we are of a mind to hear, we could save ourselves some unwelcome results of our behavior. (Note Luke chapter 14)



After the dinner, Jesus was joined by great multitudes of people anxious to hear His stories.

As He explained the way to follow Him, a group of tax-gatherers and other folks joined the group.

They were apparently attracted by the crowds following Jesus that day. The old saying goes that a crowd will help draw a crowd!

Some religious leaders in the crowd began to grumble among themselves, saying, *“This man receives sinners and eats with them.”* (Luke 15: 2 *) Apparently the religious leaders were ready to call the church leader who invited Jesus to his house a sinner!

Are we so different in our day? Have we heard others talk about the one who is doing his best, with God's help, to bring the message of the hour, either through the spoken or written word?

Of course, the one bringing the message is aware that he is at best, a forgiven sinner. Thank God that, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1: 9*)

We are reminded of the old preacher who wisely observed, *“I think the people are going to have roast preacher for dinner today!”*

Jesus in his wisdom ignored the slurs and began to tell the crowd the parable of a man who owned one hundred sheep.



“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it.” (Luke 15: 4 *)

Jesus used the example of sheep so that the people, who were familiar with sheep herds and their habits, would understand the point of the story.

The shepherd did not leave the ninety-nine sheep without first assuring their safety and food supply. He left them in "open pasture" so they would have food to eat during the man's absence. He left them in an open area so that wolves would not be tempted to attack the sheep. What a tremendous responsibility of any shepherd of sheep or a congregation to provide wisely, even when their attention is elsewhere.

We are reminded of the old hymn, the Ninety and Nine, believed to be public domain. *"There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold, but one was out on the hills far away from the gates of gold, away on the mountain wild and bare, away from the tender Shepherd's care, away from the tender Shepherd's care."*

The message of the hymn writer and the message of the hour is how much care the Lord (our Shepherd) has for the one gone astray. Although the one is away from the "flock" and out on the "mountain", (in the world and outside the fellowship) the shepherd of the local church grieves for the return of the lost one, even as our Father cares.

Perhaps we say, well, that is not my concern. The Pastor or Elder or Deacon should be doing that. Wait! What would God have us do to help seek the lost one?



At the very least, we have the ability to ask our Father to be merciful to the shepherd and the lost one and ask that the one be led back to the "flock", God can help lead the poor "lost" sheep find its way.

"The Lord is not slow about His promises, as some count His slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9*) When Almighty God is concerned about one little lost sheep should we not do our part to help seek the lost one.

We are told that, *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...that the world should be saved through Him"* (Jesus). (John 3:16, 17*)

It is comforting to realize that, *"the Son of Man (Jesus) has come to seek and to save that which was lost."* (Luke 19: 10')

Jesus came as the Great Shepherd to be the example of shepherd concerned about the one lost sheep. God help us to follow the example and go looking for the one who has gone astray. Does anyone come to mind?



Can we hear the happy voice of the shepherd as he gathers his friend and neighbors to announce, *"Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!"* (Luke 15: 6*)

Jesus said, *"I tell you 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."* (Luke 15: 7*)

Lord, what can we do this very day to help the shepherd see the "lost sheep"?

Comments by Harry Bain

* New American Standard Bible