

Jesus Sees Me as a Sheep to be Saved

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Luke 15:1-10

Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them."

We are all lost sheep. Jesus has come to save us all.

On the surface, this parable seems straightforward. The tax collectors and sinners are the lost sheep. Jesus defends His actions in eating with them by reminding the Pharisees that they, too, are lost sheep whom He has come to save. However, Luke emphasizes that these tax collectors and sinners "drew near" to Jesus. While the Pharisees and scribes complained, if the Pharisees weren't physically standing far away from Jesus, they were certainly distancing themselves from Him ideologically.

If the sinners were near to Jesus and the Pharisees were distant, then who are the truly lost sheep?

The answer, of course, is both. At that moment, the Pharisees were more lost than the sinners. The tax collectors were lost in their greed. The Pharisees were lost in their pride. Jesus came for both. Jesus came for all, and because He came for all, He came for me.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who came specifically to find the lost. When Jesus says that He came to seek and to save the lost, He does not limit the scope of His salvation. He is not excluding some and including others; rather, He is calling each of us to recognize in ourselves that we are lost and in desperate need of Him. Some are lost through greed, some through pride, and others through various sins — but Jesus came for all.

The whole world is lost; therefore, Jesus came to save the world. I am lost. I know that Jesus came for me. He came for the world; therefore, I know He came for me. Jesus is my Good Shepherd.

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? 5 "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 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!'

Being one of Jesus' sheep is not without cost. The cost of Jesus as our shepherd is repentance and admission of our sins. This is a price the Pharisees, in their pride, are unwilling to pay.

John the Baptist had called the Pharisees to repentance through baptism, and they had rejected his call. Jesus calls them again. Their attitude toward the "sinners" proves their own sinfulness, but it is also an invitation of the gospel: that God will rejoice over them if they but turn and repent.

Cain was jealous of his brother Abel because God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's. In his frustration, Cain lashed out and killed Abel. All Cain ever needed to do was humble himself and repent, and God would have rejoiced over him as a lost sheep.

We often try to hide our failures and inadequacies behind lies and accusations against others, just like Cain and the Pharisees did. We think, "I might not be perfect, but look at him." We do this so others will think better of us, and we hope God will think better of us too. But all we ever need to do to make God rejoice is to repent and confess our sins.

The Pharisees wanted recognition for their piety and loved to be praised. We don't need piety to receive the love and joy of our Father. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who loves us despite our sins and who came to find us when we were lost.

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. 8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 "And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' 10 "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Each sheep is precious to Jesus.

Jesus emphasizes that this woman had only ten drachmas. A drachma was a single day's wage. Jesus purposely paints the picture of a woman who, through a lifetime of hard work and careful spending, has managed to save up ten drachmas. That's just over a week's wages—her entire worldly possessions. How diligently and carefully she searches for that one lost coin.

We wouldn't expect such devotion from someone who has thousands or millions of drachmas. Someone who has so much that they might not even notice the loss of one. But Jesus makes it clear that despite having millions of sheep, He is just as concerned over the loss of even one as this woman would be over her single coin. His love and concern for each of us are the same, no matter how many He has.

Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, cares for each of His sheep individually. His love, concern, and joy for each one are just as great as if they were all He had.

The blessing of being an only child is that you receive all the love and attention of your parents. Jesus reassures us through this parable that His love and care for each of us individually are just as personal. He is the Good Shepherd who never forgets even one of His sheep.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are the lost sheep. We must remember that and view others as fellow lost sheep, just like ourselves.

Last week, our text began with the solemn pronouncement: "**Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.**"

This simple statement reminds us of a profound truth about God: He is *simple*.

It doesn't mean He is simple-minded or easy to understand. It means that God is one, undivided, complete in His essence. He is who He is, fully and entirely. What He is, He is completely; what He is not, He is not at all.

He is absolute truth, goodness, righteousness, love, mercy, justice, and so forth. He is not evil, selfish, or sinful in any way.

We are not one thing; we are complex. We are made in God's image, but through our disobedience, that image is marred and broken. We are flawed, sinful by nature, yet through Christ, we are washed clean. Still, we remain imperfect and in need of salvation. In short, we are lost sheep.

In our text, the Pharisees saw these people — the sinners — as simply *sinners*. Jesus saw them differently: as sinners created by God in His image, whom He had come to save.

We tend to label people outright — some as completely lost, others as righteous. But fundamentally, we are all lost sheep. We are all sinners. Jesus alone is the one *thing* that is perfect. He is the Good Shepherd. Because of Him, we can rejoice, knowing that despite our failures, He always seeks us out, loves us, and brings us home. We can trust in Jesus—the one who is who He has promised to be.

What a wonderful joy it is to know we have a Shepherd who never gets lost Himself, who always remains true, and whose love and mercy never fail. He is our Good Shepherd, always coming to seek and save lost sheep like us.