

The Parables of Jesus #27
The Parable of the Lost Sheep
(Lk. 15:1-7)
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INTRODUCTION

A. Tonight we begin a study of three parables found in Luke 15

1. These three are among the best known in the Bible
2. They were told together in answer to criticism by the Pharisees and scribes
3. In a sense, all three are intended to communicate the intense love and concern of God for people
 - a. shown in the relationships of the shepherd with the sheep; the woman with the coin; and the father with his son
 - b. shown in the action in the parables to that which was lost
 - c. shown in the joy expressed when that which was lost was found
4. They are also worthy of separate examination

B. We must see the tremendous conflict of contrast at work

1. Two basic groups of people create a great contrast
 - a. one is the group represented by the scribes and Pharisees
 - 1/ presented as the religious, holy, reputable people
 - 2/ these people were self-proclaimed as God-pleasing
 - b. the other is the group represented by tax collectors and sinners
 - 1/ these are the unholy, disreputable, unsavory people
 - 2/ these people were judged unfit for God, displeasing
2. That contrast created a tremendous conflict
 - a. the scribes and Pharisees rejected the tax collectors and sinners

- b. there was a tremendous distinction made between the groups
- c. the nature of the conflict made it repulsive for the scribes and Pharisees to look kindly or favorably on the others, much less see them as important to God

C. The contrast and conflict was part of the core problem the religious elite had with Jesus and his ministry

- 1. Jesus often displayed a confusing attitude
 - a. he was merciful to tax collectors and sinners
 - b. he was harsh to scribes and Pharisees
- 2. That attitude brought questions and challenges from the scribes and Pharisees
 - a. Luke 15:2 -- And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, ""This man receives sinners and eats with them." (NKJ)
 - b. how could Jesus (supposedly a man of God) behave this way toward these reprobates?
 - c. this is a question that still plagues religious people today because they do not understand God's love or God's mission

D. These parables are little glimpses meant to reveal God's love and mission

- 1. If you miss this out of these parables, you've missed the important part
- 2. Keep this in mind even though we will look at the three parables separately

I. THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEP (Lk 15:3-7)

A. The story is framed in the form of a question

- 1. Here, it's not only a story to illustrate a truth
- 2. It is an inquiry into the behavior of the audience
- 3. It's like saying, "If this happened to you, wouldn't you

do this to try to solve the problem?”

B. The story is about a shepherd who had one sheep stray from the fold

1. He had 100 sheep, but one was lost
2. He left the 99 alone (they did have each other)
3. He went in search of the one lost sheep
4. When he found it he put it on his shoulders
5. He rejoiced greatly, even calling his friends and neighbors to share in the recovery of the one sheep

C. Simple story --- just what you would have done, isn't it?

1. Agreement is easy because it is such an innocent story
2. Agreement is essential to understand what is happening

II. LESSONS FROM THE PARABLE

A. Remember, the story is told in response to criticism by scribes and Pharisees

1. If Jesus did not deserve the criticism, then there must have been something happening that scribes and Pharisees did not understand
2. They had missed the strength of God's love for mankind

B. The sheep reminds us of the tax collectors and sinners away from God

1. The sheep had wandered away from the shepherd's care
 - a. perhaps it had been attracted to something that led it away
 - b. something that is appealing and desirable
 - c. something tempts and seduces
 - d. it is easy to let things pull us away
2. The sheep was careless

- a. how like so many people -- careless in how they live
 - b. they don't mean to get away from God, but suddenly they look up and are lost
3. The sheep was not purposely following its shepherd
- a. it went where it wanted to go, and did what it wanted to do
 - b. the result was not what it had planned
4. The sheep was unaware of the warnings of danger
- a. it failed to heed the shepherd's voice
 - b. it was unprepared for the damage that danger causes
5. The sheep was dissatisfied and took charge of itself
- a. people are often like that -- not satisfied with God's plans
 - b. they try to improve their own lives
6. Many verses present the human problem in these terms
- a. Isa 53:6 --
All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (NKJ)
 - b. Prov 21:16 --
A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead. (NKJ)
 - c. Jer 50:6 --
My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray; they have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place. (NKJ)
 - d. Ezek 34:6 --
My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of

the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them."
(NKJ)

C. The emphasis in this story is not on the sheep

1. The emphasis is on the shepherd
 - a. this story is not meant to explain all about lost sheep
 - b. the lost sheep is a simple matter of fact in the story
 - c. the emphasis is on the action of the shepherd
2. Why did Jesus tell a story about a shepherd finding a lost sheep
 - a. because it illustrates God's loving care for people who have gone astray and are lost
 - b. it also explains why Jesus was so involved with people like publicans and sinners
3. If the religious people could understand and relate to looking for a lost sheep, then perhaps they could relate to God searching for lost people

D. Please see the divine joy when one lost person is "found"

1. Being "found" is directly related to "repenting"
2. God's search is designed so that a lost person who is found turns back to God
3. Scribes and Pharisees didn't seem to understand this divine motivation

E. We need to consider the joy in heaven to understand the Lord's work on our behalf

1. Heb 12:2 --
looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (NKJ)
2. 1 Pet 2:23-25 --

who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness-- by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (NKJ)

3. Luke 19:10 --
for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (NKJ)

CONCLUSION

- A. Why does God put so much energy and effort into sinful, rebellious people? -- Because he loves them, cares for them and wants them back**
- B. Religious people sometime have difficulty seeing things from God perspective**
 1. Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for receiving and eating with sinners and tax collectors -- the riff-raff
 2. Even today, the church may despise the lost, shunning sinners
 3. Yet it was for sinners, the very ones who make us uncomfortable that Jesus gave his life
- C. Think again about what causes joy in heaven -- then you'll understand God better**
- D. Invitation**