

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Let me begin by giving you a scenario for deciding what you would do. And....what you should do.

- I ask that you use your imagination to put yourself in the midst of this account.

Pretend you are a shepherd over a flock. A flock of 100 sheep.

- You have your sheep out in green pastures.
- Still waters are available to them.

They are doing well.

- You take pride in how good they look.
- How you have things together and under control.
- And.....you know your flock. You have a handle on them.

One night you catch some sleep.

- You wake up the next morning and the sun is shining.
- Another beautiful day.

But you look out over your flock and something is wrong.

- You look closer and one of your sheep is missing.

Now here's the question.

- What are you going to do?

You have a number of choices.

- You can go looking for the one lost sheep.

But what about the 99?

- You do have other helpers who can stay and watch over the flock.
- You are not alone in your work.
- You could leave the 99 with them and you could set out looking for the lost sheep.

But considering that option, there are also some challenges.

- It will be a lot of work. It will take a lot of time.
- Will you even find the sheep?
- And, if you find it, will it be okay?
- Or has it fallen prey to a wild animal?

Will it recognize you?

- Will it be willing to come back with you.....or.....fight you all the way back?

Again, you still do have the 99. That's a good number. There's comfort in that.

- 99 out of 100; that's a pretty good percentage.

A lot to consider.

- What are you going to do?

For any shepherd in this situation, there is a price associated with this.

- Searching has its price.
- And the act of restoration has its price.

Well, that is pretty much the scenario given to us by Jesus in His parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke chapter 15.

- Luke chapter 15 has sometimes been called, “The Gospel of the Outcast.”

It indicates to us, and Jesus teaches us in the parable, how we are to act towards sheep that have wandered from the flock.

- That is, anyone unrepentant and in unbelief.

Jesus tells us that the man when he knew he had lost 1 of the 100, headed out into the open country.

- Notice the lost sheep did nothing to begin his searching except to become lost.

The man went after the 1 lost sheep until he found it.

- He found it huddled, incapable of movement.

- A wayward sheep, or person, is incapable of being saved. Of repentance and belief on their own.

And what did the man do with the lost sheep?

- There was no beating.
- He was compassionate.
- He did not say, “Okay, I’ll rescue you this time....but after this!”
- He did not even compel the sheep to walk.
- He picked up the sheep, put it on his shoulders, and carried it back rejoicing.

Isaiah chapter 40 verse 10 gives us this portrayal of God.

- Of a loving, gentle Shepherd carrying His sheep.
- “He tends His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; he gently leads those that have young.”

The shepherd must carry on his shoulders, the burden of the sheep.

- Without shouldering the burden, there is no restoration.
- The shepherd accepts the task with joy.

And he carries the sheep home.

- 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 that was lost.”
- The restoration brings not only joy to the shepherd, and joy to the village when returning.....
- But also, we are told, the angels in heaven.
- There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents.

I began this message with the scenario of 100 sheep and 1 is lost.

- What do you do considering the cost of restoration and it is only 1 in 100.

Let me now change the scenario and how you do with this from a different perspective.

- Still only 1 out of 100 sheep is lost.
- But now, in the second scenario you are the lost sheep.

How important is care for the lost one now?

- How about cost?
- Is it still a factor? If you are the lost sheep, from your perspective, is any cost too much?

So what does this parable tells us about Jesus?

- Jesus is concerned about every single sheep.
- Jesus makes a relentless search for one lost sheep.
- Jesus is always after us.
- Jesus will stop at nothing.
- No cost is too great to find and save one sheep.

In fact, Luke chapter 15 is part of what is called Luke's travel narrative.

- Jesus is speaking this parable as He journeys swiftly to Jerusalem to shed His blood and die on the cross.

Jesus is filled with supreme joy when one lost sheep is found.

- The audience this parable was told to included the Pharisees.
- They charged Jesus, "This Man welcomes sinners."
- Thanks be to God that for once the Pharisees were right!

And what is Jesus telling us and teaching us in this parable today?

- Every person is of great value.
- Every person is important to be cared for, sought after, found, and carried and returned home.
- For every person, there ought to be great joy when they return.
- And we ought to be ready to carry the burden and bring anyone home on our shoulders.

As we look at this account.....we at times can be all of the different main characters in the parable.

- We can be the man or the shepherd seeking out those that are lost.....
- Either those that have wandered from the flock or never have been in the flock.

Will you search for them?

- Will you carry their burdens and place them on your shoulders?

I would like to challenge each of us this week.....

- Each of us knows someone who has been missing from church.
- I challenge you to search out and make contact with them.

- Tell them you miss them and would love to see them back here.
- Back home where they will be welcomed.

Think of the outreach and what that would be like if everyone of us did that this week.

- Think of what this Sanctuary might look like next Sunday.
- And think of the rejoicing we would have if one returned.

You may be the man searching the sheep, but at the same time you also are one of the 99 that are still together under the care of the shepherd.

- Secure together in the church.
- Secure in the arms and care of our ultimate Good Shepherd.

Recognize that Jesus continues to be in our midst.

- In a few minutes when you kneel as you are able at this altar.....
- Jesus will feed you with His own body and blood.
- Think of this.....in a few minutes when you come to the altar or we come to you in the pew as appropriate.....Jesus has got you on His shoulders.
- He's carrying you with joy.
- You were a lost sheep and you have been found.
- Give praise and glory to God that you are in His arms.

Jesus has worked repentance and faith in you.

- There is rejoicing over you today.
- Rejoicing here and with all the angels in the presence of God.

But we also still have that third group.

- That 1 in the 100 that has wandered away.
- Each of us may at times stray and be the one lost from the flock.

And if or when you are.....

- Be reminded that each one of us counts and are of great value to Christ.
- Be reminded that Christ died and rose for each one of us.
- Be reminded that Jesus has you engraved in the palm of His hands.
- Be reminded that you are His.

I came across this statement from another pastor this week that I thought was pretty good.

- “Lostness is Christ’s cup of tea.”

Our Gospel reading for last week ended with these words, which lead us into this parable today.

- “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Lost and found sheep.

- We have been both and we have a role to play with both of them.
- “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 206 in your hymnal.