

The Lost Sheep Part II The Sheep

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance"—Luke 15:4-7.

Now we come to the point, and observe THE ONE OBJECT OF SEARCH.

This sheep lies on the shepherd's heart, and he must at once set out to look for it. He leaves the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness and goes after that which is lost until he find it.

It is a definitive search. The shepherd goes after THE sheep, and after nothing else; and he has the one particular sheep in his mind's eye.

One could have imagined that Christ, the Shepherd, went down into the wilderness to catch any sheep he could find. Many were running about, and he did not own any one of them more than another, but was content to pick up the one that he could first lay hold upon; or rather, that which first came running after him.

Not according to the case depicted in the parable. It is his own sheep that he is seeking, and he goes distinctly after that one. It is his sheep which was lost,—a well-known sheep; well known not only to himself, but even to his friends and neighbours,—for he speaks to them as if it was perfectly understood which sheep it was that he went to save.

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (Joh 10:14-16)

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. (Joh 10:27-30)

Separating Sheep Ability to separate the sheep. When it becomes necessary to separate several flocks of sheep, one shepherd after another will stand up and call out: "Tahhoo! Tahhoo!" or a similar call of his own choosing. The sheep lift up their heads, and after a general scramble, begin following each one his own shepherd. They are thoroughly familiar with their own shepherd's tone of voice. Strangers have often used the same call, but their attempts to get the sheep to

follow them always fail. The words of JESUS are indeed true to Eastern shepherd life when he said:

"The sheep follow him, for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:4,5)

Jesus knows all about his redeemed, and he goes definitely after such and such a soul. When I am preaching in the name of the Lord, I delight to think that I am sent to individuals with the message of mercy. I am not going to draw the bow at a venture at all; but when the Divine hands are put on mine to draw the bow, the Lord takes such aim that no arrow misses its mark; into the very centre of the heart the word finds its way; for Jesus goes not forth at a peradventure in his dealings with men. He subdues the will and conquers the heart, making his people willing in the day of his power.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (Mat 25:34)

Eph 1:4 *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

He calls individuals and they come. He says, "Mary," and the response is, "Rabboni."

I say, the man in the parable sought out a distinct individual, *and rested not til he found it*;

In the same manner Jesus goes out seeking and searching for you, where-ever you may go, where ever you may be. He searches with no-doubt that he will find you.

He does not grope about to catch whom he may, as if he played at Blindman's-buff with salvation, but he seeks and saves the one out of his own sheep which he has his eye upon in its wanderings. Jesus knows what he means to do, and he will perform it to the glory of the Father.

Note that this is an all-absorbing search.

He is thinking of nothing but his own lost sheep. The ninety-and-nine are left in safety; but they are left. When we read that he leaves them in the wilderness we are apt to think of some barren place; but that is not intended: it simply means the open pasturage, the steppe, the prairie: he leaves them well provided for, leaves them because he can leave them.

Permanent Sheepfolds More permanent sheepfolds. Such shelters are usually built by the shepherd in a valley, or else on the sunny side of a hill where there is protection from cold winds. This fold is a low building with arches in front of it, and a wall forming an outdoor enclosure, joining the building. When the weather is mild, the sheep and goats are allowed to be in the enclosure during the night, but if the weather is stormy, or the evenings are cold, then the flock is shut up in the interior part of the fold, with its protection of roof and walls. The walls of the

enclosure are about three feet wide at the bottom, and become narrower at the top. They are from four to six feet high. Large stones are used in constructing the outsides of the wall, and they are also placed on the top, and then the center is filled with smaller pieces of stone, of which there is much in the land. Sharp, thorn bushes are put on the top of this wall to protect the sheep from wild animals or robbers. There is a gate guarded by a watchman. JESUS made reference to the familiar sheepfold of Israel when He spoke those memorable words of His:

"He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter [watchman] openeth. (John 10:1-3)

For the time being he is carried away with the one thought that he must seek and save the lost one, and therefore he leaves the ninety-and-nine in their pasture.

The sheep may go through a rocky road!"

The shepherd does not seem to know what the way is, his heart is with his lost sheep.

"Shepherd, it is a heavy climb up yon mountainside."

He does not note his toll; his excitement lends him the feet of the wild goat; he stands securely where at other times his foot would slip. He looks around for his sheep and seems to see neither crag nor chasm.

"Shepherd, it is a terrible path by which you must descend into yonder gloomy valley."

It is not terrible to him: his only terror is lest his sheep should perish; he is taken up with that one fear, and nothing else. He leaps into danger, and escapes it by the one strong impulse which bears him on.

It is grand to think of the Lord Jesus Christ with his heart set immovably upon the rescue of a soul which at this moment is lost to him.

No matter how lost the sheep may be, no matter how long gone, the shepherd will persevere in the search: "until he find it."

The parable says nothing about his not finding it; no hint of failure is given; we dream not that there may be a sheep belonging to him which he will never find.

I will never leave you nor forsake you

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Heb 13:5)

Oh, brethren, there are a great many whom you and I would never find; but when Jesus is after his own lost sheep, depend upon it such is his skill, so clearly does he see, and so effectually does he intervene, that he will surely bring them in. A defeated Christ I cannot

conceive of. It is a personal search, and a persevering search, and a successful search, until he finds it. Let us praise and bless his name for this.

The next scene is the shepherd at home, saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

As the found sheep is the cause of the shepherd's rejoicing so you are the cause of Jesus rejoicing, and not only Jesus, but the angels of heaven, the multitude of saints in the heavens and the saints on earth rejoice with him, over the saving of one lost soul, YOURS

Notice what Jesus does when he finds his lost sheep

I invite you to notice the first mention of joy we get here:

"When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing."

"That is a great load for you, shepherd!" Joyfully he answers, "I am glad to have it on my shoulders."

The mother does not say when she has found her lost child, "This is a heavy load." No; she presses it to her bosom. She does not mind how heavy it is; it is a dear burden to her. She is rejoiced to bear it once again.

"He layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." Remember that text: "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

*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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2)*

*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present **you** faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, (Jud 1:24)*

Jesus is still seeking the lost sheep

Who is the Lost Sheep, You are: for we all like sheep have gone astray but have now returned to the shepherd and bishop or overseer of your soul.

Not knowing Jesus = lost sheep

Not finding your place in the body = lost sheep

Not maintaining your responsibility to the Gospel = lost sheep

But the Good Shepherd is come to seek and to save that which is lost, the sheep, your own good self.