

February 7, 2021

If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? Matthew 18:12 NIV

Three things to note about the parable of The Lost Sheep.

First, the lost sheep *is one of the fold*. One of us, people in our church, teens, young adults, maybe even seasoned elders with lifelong memberships. The lost sheep “knows better” but has wandered -- misguided, deceived, curious ... whatever. But **one of us**.

Second, the lost sheep was not abandoned because *the shepherd came looking*. The power of Jesus is not confined to the walls of a church or its membership rolls. It doesn't get dropped on the doorstep of the theatre, or fall away if you hang a necklace around your neck. The power of Jesus is available to every heart that cries out to God. It is surrounding the cold, locked hearts of even those not interested *because Jesus paid for them and is waiting and listening for their cries*. In the parable of the lost sheep, the Shepard has gone to look for the one that has wandered away. Help was coming! Help was in progress! Redemption was *certain*.

Third, the lost sheep was *restored*. *Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Luke 15:3-5 NIV*

This is where the story gets really good!

Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. Luke 15:6-7 NIV

What is missing in the parable? Shame is missing. Judgment is missing.

Does it say anywhere the lost sheep had to apologize for being foolish? Does it say there was condemnation, or judgment? Did the little lost sheep slink off into a corner to lick his wounds, or find some pride?

No. The shepherd called *everyone* to have a party. To be glad! Then Jesus breaks away from the parable to pull back the curtain and tell us what happens in heaven when a sinner cries out for help. More rejoicing than can be imagined because his victory is certain.

A sinner's cry for help equals certain victory.