

Will You Carry Me?

“Parable of the Lost Sheep”



“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” John 10:11

The Parable of the Lost Sheep found in Matthew 18:12-14 and Luke 15:3-7 is the most comforting of all the parables to me. It doesn't matter how small I am in the world, or how insignificant, I am still just as important as everyone else in God's eyes. Parables make us put ourselves into the story. Sometimes we don't want to listen to advice, but when it is put into a story, we are sometimes forced to realize that it is talking to us. I think the Pharisees had this same experience. However, sometimes we all hear but we don't understand. We hear a nice story, but we need to see how we fit into that story.

Do you know what it's like to be lost and not know where to turn for help? We can be physically lost or emotionally or psychologically lost. We can be lonely or disoriented. The shepherd was diligent and searched until he found the sheep.

The parable is a simple story of a sheep that was lost. The shepherd went out and searched for it until he found it and carried it back to the safety of the fold. He didn't say “Well I have ninety-nine other ones; that one will just have to be eaten by the wolves.” It wasn't just a lamb; it was the shepherd's own lamb! The Shepherd put himself in a position of obligation to the lost lamb. A hymn called “The Ninety and Nine” tells this story in poetry.

How did the sheep get lost in the first place? Evidently the sheep saw something outside the fold that attracted him. He went after it and then all of a sudden he was lost. Christ did not say that the shepherd complained about hunting for the sheep or carrying the sheep. Instead he says he rejoiced. How often we hear of people who have been able to carry someone from a burning home or help someone out of a car during an accident and they don't know where they got the strength. They didn't complain about the weight. They rejoiced that they were able to do it. The same is true with God. He rejoices. Our weight, our sins, may be many, but he rejoices when we ask His forgiveness and are back in the safety of His arms.

I picture a father who is proudly carrying his child on his shoulders so the child can see above the crowds. The child has a wonderful feeling of security. The father has a look of pride on his face. When we are carried on Christ's shoulders we are able to see above the throngs of people. Christ didn't make the sheep walk back to the fold. The sheep did nothing but accept the ride on the shoulders of the shepherd. We can do nothing except accept the gift.

The parable of the lost coin which follows this parable is different in that the coin still has value when found. However a lost sheep if left lost too long will lose its value as far as its worth, and it could be eaten and never be found. In the story of the lost sheep the shepherd has the responsibility to find it as soon as possible. One time my brother had a Black Angus jump the fence and run away. They searched for it for a couple weeks. They never did capture it, but they saw it a couple times. The farmers all agreed that it had been on the run for so long it no longer had the value it had before. It was a big loss because his boys had several prize winning Angus in the past and were grooming this one for the fair also.

This is also the story of God's leaving Heaven where He was in the company of angels to come to earth as a Babe that He might find us and lead us to salvation with Him. He had to become one of us. He didn't have to come to earth for us. He tried several times to help us, but found that only His sacrificing His life for us was going to save us. The shepherd did not leave the other sheep alone. He left the other shepherds to guard them

while he went out to find the one that had strayed. When Christ returned to Heaven, He left the Holy Spirit behind to stay with us.

Christ didn't set himself apart from all the people. The Pharisees talked about the fact that Christ went among the riffraff of the day. Christ taught in open areas. He went to dinner with the tax collector. He welcomed the woman who had sinned. He healed the lame, the down trodden that no one else wanted to care for. He dared to touch the lepers. He lived in a company of sinners then as He does today. But we can be in the safety of His bosom. That love is available to all of us regardless of how much we have sinned and strayed. Christ is always there. He may not physically pick us up and carry us, but He carries us every day. Christ has many thoughts in His head every day for us. He is filled with compassion; we are His sheep. He came to protect us and offer us eternal life in the safety of His fold. The career of Christ is to offer us His love. He laid down His life for us. We can trace it for more than 2000 years and it will continue always. No matter how small or insignificant we are, Christ is always there for us.

How does this apply to us today? It is still relevant. We still need to be taken home. We always have the shepherd who will find us if we call. Please read this selection from The Message to see how it applied during the Old Testament times, during the time Christ was on earth, and today. God took the first step. Now it is our turn.

When I think of being carried, I think of the image of Father Flannigan's Boys town. One day a boy was abandoned at the home. He had polio. Soon the older boys were seen carrying him. One day Father Flannigan asked Reuben Granger, one of the older boys, if carrying Howard was hard for him. He replied "He ain't heavy, Father... he's m' brother." It became the motto for them from then on. I don't think we are heavy for God any more than the young sheep was heavy for the Shepherd. He carries out of love for us as the young man carried the boy with polio. I can't think of anything nicer than being carried in the arms of my Lord and Saviour.

"God, the Master, says: 'From now on, I myself am the shepherd. I'm going looking for them. As shepherds go after their flocks when they get scattered, I'm going after my sheep. I'll rescue them from all the places they've been scattered to in the storms. I'll bring them back from foreign peoples, gather them from foreign countries, and bring them back to their home country. I'll feed them on the mountains of Israel, along the streams, among their own people. I'll lead them into lush pasture so they can roam the mountain pastures of Israel, graze at leisure, feed in the rich pastures on the mountains of Israel. And I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I myself will make sure they get plenty of rest. I'll go after the lost, I'll collect the strays, I'll doctor the injured, I'll build up the weak ones and oversee the strong ones so they're not exploited.'" Ezekiel 34:11-16.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, nothing escapes Your watchful gaze and care. I know that You are constantly watching me. May I always walk in the light of Your truth. When I stray, please come and find me and bring me back into Your loving presence. Help me to feel the security that You are carrying the burden for my sins and help me to seek to do Your will every day. Amen

1. How do you compare to the lost sheep?
2. How did this parable apply to the Pharisees?
3. Have you ever had the opportunity to help someone and then wonder where you got the strength?
4. How important is prayer in this struggle?
5. What is the duty of a good shepherd? Are we sometimes called on to be a shepherd?

Parable of the Lost Sheep

“And he spake this parable unto them, saying, ‘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 15:3-7

The Ninety and Nine

Word by Elizabeth Clephane, music by Ira Sankey

“There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold.

But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold.
Away on the mountains wild and bare.
Away from the tender Shepherd’s care.
Away from the tender Shepherd’s care.

“Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?”
But the Shepherd made answer: “This of Mine
Has wandered away from Me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find My sheep,
I go to the desert to find My sheep.”

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry,
Sick and helpless and ready to die;
Sick and helpless and ready to die.

“Lord, whence are those blood drops all the way
That mark out the mountain’s track?”
“They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.”
“Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?”
“They are pierced tonight by many a thorn;
They are pierced tonight by many a thorn.”

And all through the mountains, thunder riven
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gate of Heaven,
“Rejoice! I have found My sheep!”
And the angels echoed around the throne,
“Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!
Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!”