

# The parable of the lost sheep



Luke 15:4-7

*The Lord Jesus had a dispute with the scribes and Pharisees about his associating with sinners. To encourage them to rejoice with him about the conversion of every sinner, he compared himself in a parable to a shepherd who had a hundred sheep and lost one. As he loved every one of his animals he went in search of the lost one and was overjoyed when he found it.*

The children realize that Jesus Christ is the good shepherd.  
He loves all, also those who have gone astray, the sinners.

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herever the Lord Jesus happens to be people gather to listen to him. His words cause many to think seriously about their life. The Lord Jesus goes often to people who are looked down upon and scorned. What he tells them about his Father in heaven makes them realize how far removed they are from God. When they regret their sins and failings and resolve to change their life, the Lord Jesus is particularly pleased. He knows that these despised and unloved people long for his love the most.

1

Not everyone shares his joy however. Some find it outrageous that he concerns himself with such contemptible people. In their opinion, the Lord Jesus should only address himself to the decent and respected citizens.

2

"In a warm and sunny land there lives a shepherd. He has exactly one hundred sheep and day after day he wanders about looking for grass and herbs for his flock. Every morning the sheep pass the shepherd in single file when they leave the pen in which they have spent the night. The shepherd knows them all and they are well cared for. Today they have found a particularly good pasture. But towards the

midday-break, the shepherd becomes more and more restless. He senses that something is not right. He counts his sheep: '1, 2, 3, 4 .... 96, 97, 98, 99. One is missing!' Yes, one is really missing..., the white one with the brown ear is nowhere to be seen! It has probably found some juicy herbs and has simply wandered off. He cannot understand it—he was so careful! But this young sheep wanted to go its own way and now, perhaps, it is in great danger. The shepherd goes in search of it; he hurries back, searching behind every rock, every bush.

"If only nothing has happened to it! I must find it before a wild animal does!' By now the shepherd is completely out of breath, his feet are aching, but he walks on and on. 'Perhaps it got tangled up in a thorn-bush or, worse still, fell down some rocky crevice.'

"There! He listens intently and hears a weak bleating. He follows the faint sound. Again and again he calls the lost animal by name. Finally he finds the frightened sheep. It is trembling. He goes up to it and strokes it gently. He speaks to it softly. After wiping the perspiration from his forehead, he lifts the sheep up and places it across his shoulders. He cheerfully goes back the long way he has come.

## Jesus Christ is our Saviour and Redeemer

"He returns to his village with all his animals. He calls the inhabitants together: 'Come, listen and rejoice with me! I found my sheep again which was in great danger. I searched for it for a long time.'"

The listeners have attentively followed the Lord Jesus' story. They now nod in agreement. A lost sheep is truly a great loss for a shepherd, even if he still has many other animals. They understand the shepherd's joy at having found his sheep again and rejoice with him. But why does the Lord Jesus tell them this story? They had asked him why he associates with sinners.

The Lord Jesus explains: "That is also the way it is in heaven:



Our heavenly Father is happier about every sinner who repents, who realizes his mistakes and wishes to better himself, than about ninety-nine just people who do not repent. I have come to seek and save the lost ones."

3/4

*"I have found my lost sheep.  
Rejoice with me!"  
The Lord Jesus seeks those who have gone astray.*

- 1 The people Jesus was talking about were despised and rejected. But Jesus did not reject them. Do you know of any rejected children?
- 2 The children look at the picture of the first lesson and recount the characteristics of a good shepherd. To explain his actions to uncomprehending people, the Lord Jesus tells another story about a good shepherd.
- 3 The children describe the picture. In that village there must also have been children who were happy that the lost sheep had been found again. The children imagine themselves in the role of such a child and repeat in their own words what the shepherd said. (The most important statement in this parable is: Rejoice with me! I have found my lost sheep.) We can sing a hymn.
- 4 Whom was the Lord Jesus referring to in the parable? The sheep are the people God gave to his Son. The lost sheep are people who turn away from God. The Lord Jesus looks for them. He wants to draw them back into his fold. He loves all people. We, too, can count on his love.