

SEEK THE LOST, REMEMBER THE COST

Luke 15: 1-7

[1] Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.

[2] Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

[3] So He told them this parable, saying,

[4] "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

[5] When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

[6] 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 which was lost!'

[7] I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The grumbling Pharisees wanted to demonstrate their disapproval of Jesus' actions, but Jesus didn't say a word in his own defense; instead, he chose to speak a parable.

The religious leaders were to picture themselves as shepherds. In reality, as leaders of the nation, they should have been serving as shepherds of God's people. Each shepherd has one hundred sheep — a typical number for the average flock of sheep.

Shepherds counted their sheep every night, for sheep would easily stray away and get lost. When this shepherd counted, he was missing one sheep and goes to look for the lost animal. We are not told if he leaves the rest of his flock with neighbors, though that is likely. He would hardly put the ninety-nine at risk for one sheep. The hunt is successful when he finds the lost animal alive and well, so the shepherd calls his friends and neighbors to celebrate the recovery of his animal.

OUTLINE:

1. The Circumstance

2. The Challenge

3. The Conduct (Praxis)

The setting of this event begins at chapters 14 up to 16 where Jesus was having a discourse with His audience - His followers and disciples.

Jesus told them this parable in the presence of the publicans and sinners, scribes and Pharisees who were the objects of the 2 parables in this chapter.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCE.

In this parable the man lost one of his 100 sheep so he went out to look for it leaving the 99. When he found it, he carried it on his shoulder, came back and called his friends, then they celebrated.

Who is the lost sheep in this context? Who are they?

The lost sheep refers to the publicans and sinners in verse 1 - "Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him". They are considered the lost and erring ones by people.

The 99 sheep refer to the Pharisees and scribes in verse 2 - 'Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." They were the "holier than you" people.

The man mentioned in the parable is the shepherd, who is actually Jesus.

The man left the 99 and went after the 1 lost sheep to find it. And when he found it, he went back rejoicing.

Jesus used the shepherd's concern for each sheep to set up the question: "Which one of you . . . does not leave . . . and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?"

The answer was obvious to these listeners —any caring shepherd would do so. He would search, find the lost sheep, carry it back to the flock, and rejoice.

II. THE CHALLENGE

The noun 'man' is used here instead of the word shepherd.

Why man? Because every man is a shepherd. (Just as everyone of us is a neighbor to someone). Men are keepers. We are all keepers. We have a task to care for someone or for something.

So every believer is a shepherd. He is pastor, he is a worker, he is the Christian.

I. Seeking The Lost.

The "publicans" were Jews who worked for the hated Roman government to collect taxes from Jewish citizens. They were considered the worst of the worst. They were assumed to be beyond hope and therefore not worthy of forgiveness.

The publicans during the time of Jesus were called sinners and considered lost.

- **They were lost by circumstances due to their need to survive.**
- **They were lost by reputation due to their wrong association.**
- **They were lost by status** as they were considered one of the lowest and most wicked in the society.

This Lost sheep that the man went out to look for is called the lost soul, the marginalized, the blind, the dead in sin.

But like the shepherd in this parable:

- 1. Every man should GO OUT and look for the sinner.**
- 2. Every man must be willing to LEAVE MUCH just to find that precious one.**
- 3. Every man should offer his SHOULDERS to carry the broken.**

"Shoulders" in Greek is **ōmos (ὤμος)** - as that on which burdens are borne.



Such calling is a challenge but there is more to it.

Imagine if the shepherd quits the moment he finds the lost sheep, what would happen to the 99?

II. Remembering The Cost.

For the man to seek the lost, there is a cost. He had to pay the price of leaving the 99.



The good shepherd will always return because the 99 listens and will only listen to his voice.

REMEMBER THE NINETY- NINE

Who are they?

They are those who belong to the fold. They are the blood-washed, They are the saved, the forgiven, the chosen, the kingdom people, the born again. They are the YOU and ME here today.

But at the same time this 99 can be composed of the self-righteous and the elder brothers.

When the man finds the lost, he goes back to his fold because the bible tells us:

I. He left them.

Was there a hireling? Not mentioned.

Every believer should remember his church. He must care for his church and those who are given to him.

I was blessed by the statement of a pastor to a couple after he officiated their wedding. He said, "when you pay your tithes, pay it to your church here in the Philippines, not abroad, because your church here is not rich and needs your support.

Eg. Our church is trying to find a way to reach the Young Working Adults because they may have felt left out.

II. They were feeding in the open.

The greek word for "open" translated as wilderness (KJV) is **erēmos (ἔρημος)**.

In Strong's Definition it means desert, wilderness.

In Thayer's Definition it means solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited

A. Used of places:

- a desert, wilderness, deserted places, lonely regions, an uncultivated region fit for pasturage.

B. Used of persons:

1. deserted by others, deprived of the aid and protection of others, especially of friends, acquaintances, kindred.
2. bereft; of a flock deserted by the shepherd; of a woman neglected by her husband, from whom the husband withholds himself.

If the 99 are in the wilderness, they are always at risk. And there are many members who are under the risk of attacks. Their spirit is safe but their body and soul are demonized.

III. There are lambs among them.

There are little ones to feed. - the "least of my brethren" are there.

Matthew 25:40 *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

IV. There can be sick and weak ones in the flock.

There are hurting people in the church. There are people who are victims of circumstances and crimes that need our help.

There are fatherless and orphans who need help. There are literally weak and sick members who need help.

We have people who come in and they go unnoticed. Sometimes the next thing we hear is they are dead, when we could have just reached out to them.

Matthew 25:34-40 NLT

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a

drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?' "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

It is wonderful to see people going out of the 4 corners of the church to win others but will it be more joyous when we come back and take care of the church?

The Ninety-nine (99) are in God's fold, but were left in the wilderness (open). They are the believers in the church, the saved ones, the kingdom people, the heaven- destined, but while waiting for the coming back of their lord, they have a need to be met, they may be in danger of attacks, they may be sick and hurting.

They need the man, the You and Me. The man who has gone through life's challenges and trials but never forgets his call.

In [Luke 22:28-32](#), Jesus told Peter, "You are the ones who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to sift you men like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail; and you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

III. THE CONDUCT.

There is what we call Practice or Praxis of what we hear.

Practice: The act of doing. It simply refers to the execution of an action or activity.

Praxis: Transformative action. It implies a form of action that aims to change.

Eg. In hospitals, attending sick patients is a practice of nurses but it becomes a praxis when they care much to see their patients survive. They don't perform for what they can receive but they truly understand what they are called for and act on it.

As a servant, If I will only do things because I had to, whatever I do will not make sense. If I only follow my job description in the checklist, whatever I do will have no meaning. I must be convinced that it is not just my job. It is who I am. Being a pastor is not my job. It is who I am.

When we do something as a practice, we may only be acting. But when we do it as a praxis, things change. Practice may end in enduring but praxis will end in enjoying.

The parable of the lost sheep ended in celebration when the man came back after finding the lost sheep. "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 which was lost!' He was not a hireling nor an on the job trainee doing his practicum. He was a shepherd who knew his flock needs him.

This message is not only for the pastors as shepherds of the church but for the "man" in the church. What can we do to seek and what can we do to care? We can do well to find and we can do better to care.

It takes a good man to seek the lost and remember the cost. It takes a good heart to do such. After all we are only imitating what the Ultimate Man has done for us. But what we can do is nothing compared to what He has done for us. We can give bread and water but He gave His blood. We can sacrifice time and money but he gave His life, His all.

The Ultimate Man - the Good Shepherd, Jesus, left everything in heaven to seek the lost. He did not only come to seek the lost but He beautified the church. He gave us beauty for ashes, oil of joy and garments of praise. One day He is coming back bringing His rewards. Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon, and I shall bring My wages and rewards with Me, to repay and render to each one just what his own actions and his own work merit."

CONCLUSION:

There is a lost sheep that we need to seek. They are the lost soul, the marginalized, the blind, the dead in sin. We should go and find them.

At the same time we should also remember the Ninety-nine. They are in the church. We should not forget the left out, the weak, the deprived, the grieving, the little ones and those who are in deep need. We should be the man who notices someone missing, goes out at all cost and carries him on his shoulders like a shepherd, just as our Lord Jesus the Ultimate Man, who carried the weight of our sins on His shoulder.

What is a piece of bread to an empty stomach? What is a cup of water to the thirsty? What is a warm welcome to a stranger? What is a piece of garment to the naked? What is a visit to the sick and in prison? But great is your reward in heaven.