

The Ultimate Rescue

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Luke 15:1-7

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The Parable of the Lost Sheep

[1] Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. [2] And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

[3] So he told them this parable: [4] “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? [5] And 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 that was lost.’ [7] Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (ESV)

Why don't we diligently go after the lost?

1. We don't see the danger

- A sheep has no way of surviving or rescuing itself - probably the most helpless creature in the world.
- Lost men and women are helpless and in great danger.
- They have no way of saving themselves and are doomed to suffer and die. But we don't see the danger when it comes to the lost.

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

~Rev 20:11-14

“The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace,

where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

~Matthew 13:41-43

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’”

~Luke 16:22-24

- This is the heart of God. The Father saw the danger. He saw our helplessness. He saw the doom and wrath and judgment and He took action. It moved Him to sacrifice.
- This is why God sent His only Son.
- This is why God incarnated – why He became flesh and blood.
- This is why Jesus eats with sinners and tax collectors.
- This is why Jesus was brutally pinned to a cross.
- This is why Jesus was forsaken by God and became a curse for us.
- This is the heart of God and the heart that He calls us to have.

2. We don't see the value

- A shepherd would give his entire life to care for the sheep.
- They were of great value to the shepherd.
- Lost men and women have great value to God (that is why He saved us!)
- God has great compassion and love for the lost in their desperate plight.
- This is amazing given what the lost are like.
- Lost men and women are enemies of God, rebellious, defiant, disobedient, ungrateful, insubordinate and arrogant.
- And despite these things God with astonishing grace chooses to make us His own children.
- This says much more about God than about us.
- He is not choosing us because of the innate value in us but merely because he has chosen to value us.
- He chooses us because of His great love (Eph. 2:4-5)!
- He knows he'll find it because he is going to persevere until he does. This is determination - this is perseverance.
- Regardless of the danger, sacrifice, enemies, risk, he will find that sheep.
- The sheep is in a desperate situation and he must rescue it.
- This is the heart of God.
- This is the kind of persevering and sacrificial love He has for lost. It's what moved the Savior to endure the beating and mocking.
- It's why He bore every sin that was placed upon him.
- It's why He persevered on the cross and drank every drop of the cup.
- It's why He was willing to be separated from the Father.
- This is the heart of God and the heart that He calls us to have.

3. We don't see the joy

- A lost sheep that is found is cause for great celebration.
- The owner of this sheep is experiencing some serious joy. And he is sharing his great joy with others.
- He is thrilled!
- There is nothing in this world that will bring you more joy than seeing someone rescued from the wrath of God. There is nothing that can bring you more delight or thrill your soul.
- Jesus didn't just tell a story about how God has compassion, takes action, pursues, initiates, perseveres and sacrifices to save the lost.
- He didn't just talk about it. He did it. He carried it out.
- He had compassion on us when we hated Him, took action, and sacrificed.
- He rescued us at an incomprehensible cost. And it was all for the joy set before him that He endured the cross scorning its shame. He sacrificed for joy and He is calling us to do the same.

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Re-read the text, Luke 15:1-7. What initial observations and insights do you have from reading this text.
- How does this story affect your soul?
- What character attributes do you see in the Shepherd that are worthy of emulation?
- Why do you think we as believers, at times, fail to evangelize and share our faith with others?
- What can we do, what steps can we take in order to cultivate deeper hearts of compassion for the lost?
- How are things going with reaching out to your "One Life" ?
- Consider taking time to pray, that God would stir us in the area of evangelism. Consider praying also for the lost friends, relative and neighbors in our relational circle.