**The Gospel of Luke**

**Witness to the Gentiles - #40**

**Love for the Lost – the Sheep and the Coin**

**Luke 15:1-7, 8-10**

**Class dinner on May 4**

Friends – Our end-of-class carry-in dinner will be Wednesday, May 4, in the E91 Friendship Room (where we had our Christmas dinner). We have sign-up and dish-to-bring sheets in class, or contact me at rlwcom@aol.com / 317-694-4141. All current and past class members and friends are welcome. See you there!

 - Bob

*PS – Tonight and next week will be George’s final two classes before summer.*

**Luke 15:1-7 – The Lost Sheep**

 ***1*** *Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.*

***2*** *And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*

 ***3*** *So he told them this parable:* ***4*** *”Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?* ***5*** *When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.* ***6*** *And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and 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 people who need no repentance.”*

**Notes and Studies**

1. A man owns 100 sheep. In Palestine at that time he was wealthy. He probably hired a shepherd from among his extended family to take care of them.
2. The shepherd is neither a “hireling” nor a “stranger.” He is a member of the extended family and naturally feels responsible before the entire family clan; any loss is a loss to all of them. This understanding of the culture clarifies the joy in the community reflected at the center of the parable. In short, the extended family loses if a sheep is lost; the whole clan rejoices if the lost is found.
3. So, the owner lost one of his sheep. Jesus did not provide any reason for what caused the sheep to get lost. Sheep are less intelligent than wolves and other predators and also are defenseless against danger. One sheep if lost alone cannot find its way home. Sheep are accustomed to moving as a herd so they wait for the shepherd to take them back home.
4. Is this not a picture of our own life as individuals and also as a church? Without Christ, we have no leader as a shepherd and are lost. We are defenseless in the wide roads of life. And we cannot find our way to God by our means. All we can do is to wait for Jesus to rescue us.
5. Here the Owner who is also the shepherd goes after the one that is lost, until he finds it. That is a beautiful picture of what Jesus does. Like the shepherd in this parable, Jesus came to earth to seek and to save the lost ([Luke 19:10](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Luke-19.asp?passage=Luke%2019%3A10&ScrptureHover=sermon-192016-The%20Parable%20of%20the%20Lost%20Sheep)).
6. One of most striking names of Jesus is “Light,” and light has one clear function which is to reveal all things round us.
7. A lost sheep can “wander on the far away hills seeking life, but wandering that has three great dangers:
8. Life without an eternal purpose is lost in the daily multi-purposes.
9. Life without a purpose is also without commitment to anything other than the self.
10. Life without a purpose has only a limited scope as it sees only the self and in a way has the Narcissistic view of life.

**The Shepherd**

1. The critics said, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” The word “fellow” has a pejorative sense.
2. Jesus did not reply to them directly but told them a parable which started with a question: *“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?”* Jesus goes to the human heart even to his critics to appeal to the natural instincts of caring.
3. Confrontation that takes place in the heart is better than the one that is public for in the heart there is a chance for a change.
4. Look at the fact that the shepherd seeks and finds the one that is lost. This completes the community. After all, one could reason that the loss of one sheep out of a hundred is only a 1% loss. A wealthy man easily handles that loss. But here Jesus the shepherd has no such cavalier disregard for the loss of one sheep. Indeed, it is the shepherd’s willingness to go after the one that gives the ninety-nine their real security. If the one is sacrificed in the name of the larger good of the group, then each individual in the group is insecure, knowing that he or she too is of little value. If lost, he or she will be left to die.
5. In our time an Arab called Muhammad edh-Dehin lost one goat above the northwestern shore of the Dead-Sea. He found the goat but also discovered the Qumran Cave in 1947, (R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1959, note 1 on page 7)
6. The Shepherd lifts the sheep to his shoulders (photo below at left) – the stray sheep may have been “too tired” but the gentle touch is from the Shepherd. We have from the 8th or 9th century this figure known as the ***Kriophoros***



 *The Kriophoros*



*The Lateran Museum in Rome has a similar marble statue of the Shepherd, and an older one in the Catacomb of Pricilla 2nd-3rd century.*

**Shepherd’s Celebration**

1. Jesus continued in verse 5, *“And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”* The shepherd carries up the lost sheep and carries it all the way home and he does so rejoicing. There is no more tender picture than this one:

a. No punishment for the lost

b. Joy and even rejoicing.

c. Jesus finds every lost sheep and carries us all the way home. And he does so rejoicing.

**It is a two-fold celebration**

1. There is celebration on Earth (15:6).

a. Jesus said in verse 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.’*” The entire village joins in the celebration. Therefore, the joy of finding the lost sheep is not just joy for the owner finding the lost sheep, but it is joy for the entire community finding the lost sheep. We may see here a kind of a reply to the critics who were grumbling.

b. The rejoicing is not for the shepherd alone. Jesus wanted a celebration with the Pharisees, as he wants our community of God’s people, who should be deeply concerned about lost people and seek them.

**2. There is Celebration in Heaven (15:7)**

a. Heaven is one of the names of God. God here not only accepts tax-collectors and other sinners but rejoices with the shepherd (verse 7)

b. Jesus was giving a jab to the Pharisees and scribes. When he said that the shepherd would leave the ninety-nine sheep and seek the one, this was a hint to 99 righteous persons who need no repentance. But who are these 99 among the Pharisees? Those who keep the Law. Were there 99 righteous?

c. When Jesus says that when a sinner repents, all heaven rejoices, he moved from the joy on earth which could be the joy of the community for keeping the Law to the Joy in Heaven where the angels also share this joy with God where there is no Law

**Luke 15:8-10 – The Parable of the Lost CoinThe Lost Coin**

 ***8*** *“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?*

***9*** *When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’* ***10*** *Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

**Notes and studies**

1. To tell a parable that has a woman as the main figure must have had a bad reception by the Pharisees, for a Pharisee would pray daily thanking God that he had not been created a woman. Jesus, in direct contrast to this point of view, goes much further by depicting his teaching as having the main character a woman. And in this Jesus elevates the worth of all women.

 This is a fact. I looked it up in my little Sedur (Jewish prayer book). The exact Jewish prayer is this:

*"Blessed are you, Hashem (the name), King of the Universe, for not having made me a Gentile."*

*"Blessed are you, Hashem, King of the Universe, for not having made me a slave."*

*Blessed are you, Hashem, King of the Universe, for not having made me a woman."*

1. The woman had ten “drachmas.” The value of the drachma was debated. According to Josephus, the “attic drachma” was worth one quarter of a silver shekel in Palestine (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 3:8, 2). J. Jeremias and others say ten drachmas were part of a woman dowry, (Parables, p. 133).
2. A coin is lost, and that motivated the woman to:

a. Light a lamp.

b. Sweep out the house

c. Search carefully

1. These three acts continue until she finds the lost drachma.
2. Then there is joy.

**The aims of the Parable**

1. Jesus was answering in his way why the Tax-Collectors and the sinners are eager to come and listen to him. His critics could not understand the reasons for these attractions. There are at least two reasons:

a. Jesus preaching the good news

b. Jesus mixes with the crowd, eats with them, drinks with them, and uses their own words and their images of life.

2. God was portrayed as a shepherd but here also as a woman who couldn’t rest until the “lost is found”

**Repentance**

1. God seeks us the lost rather than we seek God. This is the Gospel.
2. No one is worthless. All their value.

**Christology**

In the first parable Jesus is the good shepherd; in the second Jesus is the good woman. The church historically has ignored the different images of Jesus in the NT and has chosen to recognize and proclaim the first (shepherd) while ignoring others (e.g. woman). The traditional attitude is short of the richness of the NT teaching itself.

**The Worth of Women in Olden Times**

The reader of Luke’s gospel has just read where Jesus likens himself to a mother hen (13:34). Here he is a good woman. Prior to Jesus, Ben Sirach wrote, *“the birth of a daughter is a loss*” (Sir. 22:3) because the male normally carried the name of the family. R. Eliezer (80-120 A.D.) was recorded in the Mishnah “If any man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law, it is as though he taught her lechery.” (Sot. 3:4 Danby edition, p 296)

**A letter from Philemon**

**Whole-hearted love of a mother**

Brother George,

May the Good Shepherd our Lord Jesus bring you back with joy and peace so that you can join us in witnessing to the Lord in his land Egypt. For Egypt is the only land that Jesus came to live in when He was a baby.

I want to share with you my deep thoughts on the two parables in the Gospel of Luke (15:1ff), the lost sheep and the lost coin. I have not seen anywhere [else] in the NT that Jesus is that figure of the Prudent Woman who lost one coin and did not rest till she recovered it. We men don’t love whole heartily as women do. The OT speaks of God as a mother who can’t ignore her children, as He says to the Prophet:

*“Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.”* (Isa 49:15).

The most striking words are those where God is the nursing, caring and

bringing-up mother of her child. I read these words with tears: “*Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I who took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them”* (Hosea 11:3-4). I was that child who was taught how to walk without knowing that the Lord is my mother who takes me in her arms and teaches how to walk and attends my wounds when I fall down and holds my hand to lift me up.

What a love, and who can compare the divine compassion to any thing in life other than that of a mother? Even Jesus wanted to gather not only the lost but to have all under his wings like a Hen protecting its little chicks (Luke 13: 34).

May the Lord open our hearts to his great love.

Philemon

(1 Jan 1968)

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