

Miscellaneous

God's Heart for the Lost

March 6th, 2011

Text - Matthew 18:10-14 & Luke 15:1-7

I've always loved Jesus' parable of the lost sheep.

- Picture of Jesus with the little lamb on his shoulders
- I was that lost sheep

But I noticed something about it in my Bible reading this week that I've never notice before.

Jesus applies the same parable to *two different kinds of sheep*.

- The lost sheep in Luke is the one I was used to. It is clearly an unbelieving "sinner" who has yet to repent of their sins and turn and follow Jesus.
 - o You can see this right away in 15:1-2
 - **Luke 15:1-2 (ESV)**
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."
 - Tax collectors and "sinners" were hated by the Jews of Jesus day, especially the religious elite like the scribes and Pharisees, because they didn't know nor follow God and His Law.
 - o Jesus drives home that the lost sheep in His parable is one of these "sinners" at the end of both the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin to follow.
 - **Luke 15:7 (ESV)**
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.
 - **Luke 15:10 (ESV)**
¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one *sinner* who repents."

- o I think the fact that Luke uses “lost” throughout this section rather than “gone astray” as Matthew does is also significant
 - **Luke 15:4-6 (ESV)**
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*.'
 - **Luke 15:8-9 (ESV)**
⁸ "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, *if she loses one coin*, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And 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*.'
 - **Luke 15:23-24 (ESV)**
²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; *he was lost, and is found*.' And they began to celebrate.
- But the lost sheep in Matthew is different. It is not an unbelieving sinner who has yet to turn and follow Jesus, *it is a believing sinner who is lost in sin.*
 - o You see the first clues right away in verse 10.
 - **Matthew 18:10 (ESV)**
¹⁰ "See that you do not despise one of *these little ones*. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.
 - Who are “these little ones”?
 - **Matthew 18:1-6 (ESV)**
¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus,

saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³ and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶ *but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin*, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- o You see the next clue that the lost sheep in Matthew are believing sinners lost in sin in the second half of verse 10.
 - **Matthew 18:10 (ESV)**
¹⁰ "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven *their angels* always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.
 - **Hebrews 1:14 (ESV)**
¹⁴ Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of *those who are to inherit salvation*?
 - Throughout the Bible, God consistently sends His angels to help those *who believe* and to judge those who don't.

- o We see a third clue that the lost sheep in Matthew are believing sinners lost in sin in verse 14.
 - **Matthew 18:14 (ESV)**
¹⁴ So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
 - When a sinner repents of their sin and puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, God not only forgives them but adopts them into His family as

His own child, *and it is not His will that any of His beloved, adopted children should perish.*

- **John 10:27-28 (ESV)**
²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and *they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*
- o The final clue that the lost sheep in Matthew are not unbelieving sinners but believers lost in sin is that Jesus refers to them as having gone “astray” rather than having been “lost”.
 - **Matthew 18:12-13 (ESV)**
¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has *gone astray*, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never *went astray*.
 - When someone goes astray, it suggests that they had been on the right track but then began to get off it. I think this is the case with the believing sinners in Matthew.
 - A better title for Matthew 18:10-14 would probably be *The Parable of the Stray Sheep* rather than the parable of the lost one.

So though there are some differences between the lost sheep in Luke 15 and the lost sheep in Matthew 18, what I want to focus on today is three things they have in common.

Three things the two lost sheep have in common

- 1) They're both lost and need to be found.
 - a. Whether you're an unbelieving sinner who has yet to repent and follow Jesus or believing sinner lost in sin, *the Bible is clear that you are lost and need to be found.*

b. One of the reasons a good shepherd leaves his 99 sheep to go after the one is that *he knows they cannot find their way back on their own.*

i. This is certainly true of unbelievers

1. **Ephesians 2:1-2 (NIV)**

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

2. **John 3:3-5 (ESV)**

³Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*

3. **1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, ...

4. **1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and *he is not able to understand them* because they are spiritually discerned.

5. **John 6:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him (literally drags).

ii. But it's also true of believers who are caught in sin as well.

1. **Matthew 18:15-17 (ESV)**

¹⁵"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have

gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

2. One of the biggest reasons the whole “Matthew 18” process exists is because believers can get lost in their sin and not be able to find their way back on their own.
- c. The second reason a good shepherd leaves his 99 sheep to go after the one is because *He knows that if He doesn't, they will be killed.*
- i. Once again this is certainly true of unbelievers
 1. **Romans 6:23 (NIV)**
²³ For the wages of sin is death,...
 2. **John 3:36 (NIV)**
³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."
 - ii. But it is also true of believers caught in sin as well
 1. **James 5:19-20 (ESV)**
¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
 2. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (ESV)**
⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards,

nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

So the first thing the two kinds of sheep have in common is that they are both lost and need to be found. The second things they have in common is...

2) They are both easy for believers to despise.

a. **Matthew 18:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ "See that you do not *despise* one of these little ones...

- i. Despise means to "think against" or to "disesteem", to look down on or to want nothing to do with.
- ii. It's what the scribes and Pharisees were doing in Luke 15. It's what the disciples were doing in Matthew 18. *And it's what we as believers are tempted to do all the time.*
 1. Note: I am not saying the scribes and Pharisees were believers in the true sense of the word.

b. Part of this temptation to despise lost sheep is very natural and even, to a degree, pure.

i. **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- ii. When you become a new creation in Christ two things happen that are naturally going to make being around unbelievers and sinners more difficult.
 1. You begin to love God.
 2. You begin to hate sin.

c. But another part of it is very ugly, prideful, and sinful.

- i. It can be so tempting to think, "What is wrong with you?!!!" "Why can't you see what I see?!!!" "Why don't you just do what I do?!!!" "Get some self-control, grow-up, start believing, and stop sinning!!!"

- ii. But when you're tempted to think this way remember this...
 - 1. You were a sinner too
 - a. **Ephesians 2:1-2 (NIV)**
¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.
 - 2. You are a sinner now
 - a. **John 8:7 (My Translation)**
⁷..."Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone."_
 - b. More refined sin is still sin to God.
 - 3. Whatever progress you've made is a gift from God
 - a. **John 3:27 (ESV)**
²⁷..."A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.
 - b. **1 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV)**
⁷...What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

So the first thing the two kinds of sheep have in common is that they are both lost and need to be found, the second thing they have in common is that they are both easy for believers to despise, and the third thing they have in common is...

3) They're both dearly loved by God.

- a. A third and final reason a good shepherd leaves his 99 sheep to go after the one is this, *because he loves them.*
- b. God dearly loves His lost sheep and that love comes out so clearly in these parables, *especially in his response when they are found.*

i. **Matthew 18:13 (ESV)**

¹³ And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

ii. **Luke 15:5-7 (ESV)**

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.

Two points of application

- 1) Lost sheep – God loves you dearly and wants you to be found.
- 2) Found sheep – Do you have God's heart for the lost? Do you have God's heart that is willing to leave the 99 to go after the one?
 - a. If you don't, you should
 - b. If you do, here are four words to keep in mind as you go...
 - i. ComPassion
 - ii. Pursue
 - iii. Prayer
 - iv. Patience

No one has ever had more of a heart for the lost than the Good Shepherd Himself, Jesus Christ.

• **Mark 2:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*"

• **Luke 19:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

• **John 10:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

- **Isaiah 53:5-6 (NIV)**

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.