

Lost and Wandering Sheep

Scripture Reading — Luke 15:1-7; Matthew 18:10-14

*“He calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’”
—Luke 15:6 —*

Today’s parable is found in both Matthew and Luke. The contexts, though, are different, so each has a different interpretation. In Luke we find tax collectors and sinners described as lost sheep, while in Matthew we find that people who struggle with obedience and stumble into sin are described as wandering sheep.

The parable in Luke reveals God’s heart for lost sinners. The Pharisees totally excluded and refused to associate with certain groups of people. But Jesus cared about everyone. There is great joy in heaven over each sinner who repents. Are there people in your neighborhood that you have never thought of inviting to church? Jesus treasures them, and he wants the Christian community to value them too. The most exciting times should be when a lost soul is found. Ninety-nine is not enough; we need that one more.

The parable in Matthew reveals God’s care for stumbling believers. Disciples can get distracted and lose interest, struggle with commitment, or be worn down by tragedy and pain. We are called to nurture all who are in the church and to follow up with any who leave. Not only must we open the front doors of the church wider, but we must take care not to lose people by the back door.

Like the good shepherd, we seek out and nurture lost and wandering sheep.

Prayer

Father, fill us with your love and concern for all who are lost and wandering, and may we all grow together in faith. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

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Printed on October 13, 2019

