

HOW MUCH DOES GOD CARE?

DATE: SUNDAY, 11TH OF APRIL 2021 | JESUS: PART 2

MATTHEW 18:10-14

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

LUKE 15:3-7

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

NOTE TO LEADERS:

We are back to four on-site services each

Sunday until regulations change:

07h30, 09h00, 10h30, 18h00

Booking is essential and can be done via the

website www.cityhillchurch.com

START TALKING

1. What was your key takeaway from Sunday's message?
2. Where was the weirdest place you've ever found your TV remote or car keys after they were lost?

START THINKING

1. Read Luke 15:3-7. Why do you think Jesus told this parable? What was He trying to teach us about what God is like?
2. On Sunday, Dusty shared how often the Bible uses the metaphor of God as Shepherd and us as His sheep. What stands out to you most from this metaphor?

START SHARING

1. Dusty shared three lessons from the parable of the lost sheep: God cares enough to 1. notice us, 2. pursue us, and 3. restore us. Which of these truths stands out to you the most? Are you struggling to believe one of these truths currently?
2. Reflect on your own life in light of the parable of the lost sheep. Has there been a time where God has graciously pulled you out of a season of wandering off and doing your own thing? How did He do this? And what changes did you need to make? Share with the group.
3. How can we pray for you?

START PRAYING

God, may your love and your pursuit of us motivate us to pursue and love those who are lost or who have gone astray. Give us a heart of reconciliation and love, not judgment, when pursuing and interacting with those who are lost or astray. Help us to remember that we were once lost, yet you pursued and saved us.

START DOING

Who has wandered off in your life? Who are you going to go after (check-in on) this week?

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, Dusty shared a message around the parable of the lost sheep from Matthew 18:10-14. The same parable is recorded in Luke 15:3-6 with a different context.

In Matthew, the disciples had come to Jesus and asked who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:1). Jesus replies to them that unless they humble themselves as a child, they'll never enter heaven. The disciples had asked this because they wanted to know who was the greatest among them. Jesus teaches that true believers are humble. He then goes on to share the parable...

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish. Matthew 18:10-14

This was the perfect analogy for God and His people. Jesus was saying that He is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. Using the "shepherd" analogy communicated Jesus' deep love, protection, and the sacrifice He was willing to make for people!

The context to the parable in Luke 15:3-6 is that the tax collectors and sinners had gathered around to hear Jesus, but the religious leaders and the Pharisees were trying to make Jesus look bad (catch Him out) for fraternising with unbelievers.

In both these passages of scripture, we see the recording of the story of the lost sheep:

- In Mathew, the context is speaking of believers who stray
- In Luke, the context is unbelievers

Both speak about the thing that separates us from Christ - sin. The parable of the lost sheep talks about how much God loves and cares for us regardless.

This is not the first time in the Bible that Jesus uses the analogy of sheep and shepherd. We also see it in the following scriptures:

- Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing."
- Isaiah 40:11 "He tends his flock like a shepherd."
- Jeremiah 31:10 "will watch over his flock like a shepherd."
- Ezekiel 34:12 "a Shepherd looks after his scattered flock."
- Matthew 9:36 "Woe to the worthless shepherd."
- John 10:16 "there shall be one flock and one shepherd."
- 1 Peter 5:4 "And when the chief shepherd appears."
- John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd."

It was common knowledge that the shepherd's primary goal was to protect the flock in those days. The sheep knew the shepherd's voice. A shepherd would risk his life to protect his flock.

THREE LESSONS FROM THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

1. HE CARES ENOUGH TO NOTICE US (COMMITMENT TO US)

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? Matthew 18:12. Jesus uses this powerful picture of the shepherd noticing one missing sheep! That implies that the shepherd knows his sheep personally. God (The Good Shepherd) pays attention and notices when one sheep goes missing - when one of us wanders off from our relationship with Him. He knows us, and because He notices us, He is committed to us.

In Psalm 139:13-14, we see a picture of The Father designing the perfect creation: *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

He notices us because He created us perfectly: *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.* Ephesians 2:10. There is no masterpiece wandering off without Him paying attention!

We, on the other hand, have a problem with familiarity. We ought to notice and be committed to others - going after the lost sheep or those that have strayed! How many people in our lives have wandered off without us noticing?

2. HE CARES ENOUGH TO PURSUE US (MISSION OF GOD FOR US)

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? Matthew 18:12. The Good Shepherd pursues His sheep. Throughout history, God has pursued us:

- God appeared in the garden to Adam and Eve after they had sinned and called out to them, "Adam, where are you?"
- After Cain killed Abel, God asked, "Where is your brother Abel?"
- God called out to Samuel four times.
- God proves himself over and over with Gideon even in his unbelief.
- God still provided for the Israelites in all of their grumbings, complaining and idol worship, and gave them manna from heaven.
- God encountered Paul (who was notorious for killing Christians) on the road to Damascus.
- Jesus appears to Thomas, who doubted His resurrection and invited Thomas to put his fingers in the holes in Jesus' hands.
- Even after Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus still invites him back into a relationship through three confessions of love.
- God sent Jesus to die in His pursuit of us: But God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

We may wonder how God still loves us after we've sinned. When we lose something important to us, our love for that thing usually intensifies - it's the same when we stray: the Father's love for us intensifies. That's why we can come back into the throne room of grace. Wherever you are, whatever you're going through, God is pursuing you!

In the same way that God pursues us, as Christ-followers, we should pursue others. "Pastors must welcome the lost sheep. Actually, I made a mistake. I said welcome, rather, go out and find them." - Pope Francis.
Who do you need to pursue?

3. HE CARES ENOUGH TO RESTORE US (LOVE OF GOD IN US)

And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish. Matthew 18:13-14. And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' Luke 15:5-6. Sometimes we just don't have the strength to accept God's forgiveness. To journey back from the wandering, the dark places, on the hard road back to restoration - that's why The Good Shepherd puts us on His shoulders and carries us.

No matter what you are going through, no matter how far you have strayed or how badly you think you've sinned, God has the strength to restore you! *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* Matthew 11:28-30.

The Good Shepherd restoring us has nothing to do with what we've done but everything to do with what He's already done for us. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for us.

If you've wandered off, the Good Shepherd has noticed. He's in pursuit of you and desires to restore you.