

Matthew 18:10-14 “Jesus Is Seeking You”

8.13.17

We’ve been talking for the last several weeks about Jesus’ discourse on humility found in Chapter 18 of Matthew’s Gospel. We’ve been using this picture as a way to try to take our minds back 2,000 years to Jesus’ teaching from the home of the Apostle Peter in Capernaum.



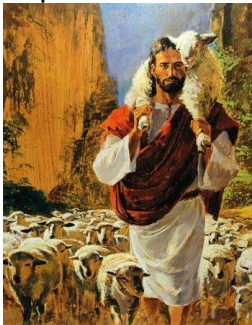
Jesus has been teaching His disciples the importance of not creating a stumbling block for any of His children (His new believers). **Jesus continued to say**, “Woe to you if you mess up my children, for as you have done it unto them, (good or bad), you are doing it to me.” We will see this play out as Jesus tells a parable this morning. **Look at verse 10.**

Matthew 18:10-14

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. 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. ¹⁴So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Twice in those five verses Jesus describes His followers as “little ones.” He’s been using this phrase throughout His teaching. The Greek word for “little ones” is MIKROS and it means: “short or brief in time, stature or importance.” It’s obvious that Jesus has only been teaching for about 2 ½ years and all of those who have accepted Him as their Lord and Savior are truly MIKROS believers...they are literally “brand new” in Jesus.

As we just read, Jesus is now going to use switch metaphors from just being MIKROS to also being “sheep” as He describes His followers. We are very accustomed to that language because Jesus very often has described Himself as the “Good Shepherd.” Therefore, these depictions of Him are commonplace:



There’s Jesus caring for His sheep.

Look back at verse 12 with me...Let’s see Jesus’ metaphor of us being sheep in this parable:

Matthew 18:12

¹² What 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?

Now, I've got a heading in my ESV Bible that says: "The Parable of the Lost Sheep." Honestly, I believe the translators at Crossway probably could have chosen a better heading. This is not a lost sheep. This is a sheep that's gone astray. You say, "Aren't they the same thing?" No. In fact, in Luke's Gospel in chapter 15 we can contrast this teaching. **Turn there with me to Luke 15.**

By the time we get to Luke 15, Jesus is in Jerusalem and He's only a few days away from His death and He is being confronted by the Pharisees and Scribes again. These men are most definitely lost! They do not believe in Jesus in the least, and Jesus is going to tell parables about a lost sheep, a lost coin and the lost son (often called The Prodigal). So, what I'm trying to do is to show you the contrast that in Matthew 18, where Jesus is teaching His disciples in Peter's home, versus confronting these Pharisees in Jerusalem. **Look at verse 1**, and notice the wording... Jesus says "lost" over and over again.

Luke 15:1-7

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.

You see, this parable and the other parables of Luke 15 describe those who are NOT in the kingdom. **Now go back to Matthew 18**, where Jesus is describing the "little ones" who are giving impression that they are in His kingdom. *Never forget that Judas is sitting in the circle with the other Apostles.*

So, (in my humble estimation) a better title in the ESV as a sub-heading would be, "The Parable of the Wayward Sheep." Again, this sheep that Jesus is describing is pictured as a believer who has "gone astray." Jesus used that phrase "gone astray" or "went astray" three times. **See it again in verse 12.**

Matthew 18:12

¹² What 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?

There is one Greek word for that phrase "one that went astray." Here it is:

Planao:

to cause to stray, to lead astray, lead aside from the right way

That last phrase in verse 12: "one that went astray" literally can also be read in the Greek this way: "for the one that IS STRAYING." It literally means they are in the process of walking away from the truth. They are RIGHT NOW straying...walking away.

So, what does the Shepherd do? Jesus says the shepherd leaves the 99 and goes after the one that is going astray. Why? Because Jesus says that His Father doesn't want anyone to perish. See it in verse 14.

Matthew 18:14

14 So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Now, what does that word, "perish" mean? Here's the Greek word:

Perish: (Greek: Apollome)

- 1. to destroy, abolish, or kill**
 - 2. to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell**
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We know this word is used in John 3:16.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

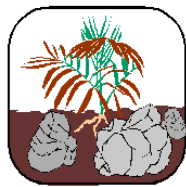
God wants no one to die. But, wait a minute... You say, "I thought Jesus was talking about HIS "little ones," His believers." Well, that's true! But, understand this...not everyone who says they are a Christian is a Christian! Not everyone in that circle in Peter's house a true believer? Is everyone in this room a true believer? Remember Judas is sitting in that circle.

Church, this is something that's very important for us to understand. Remember the Parable of the Sower from Matthew 13 (I taught this back in February).

A Sower Went Out to Sow



packed soil



stony ground



thorny ground



good soil

Remember the sower sowed seeds in four kinds of soils (or hearts), but only one of the soils actually bore any fruit from the plants that sprang up. Not everyone who says that they're a Christian is a Christian. **Let me show you a key verse...**

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

This is exactly what happened with Judas. He wandered from the faith. It looked like he was walking in the path of truth, but he left and never returned. If someone says they are a

Christian, they are not going to live in sin or never come to church for years on end. They will come back to the faith. It's called the doctrine of perseverance and the Apostle Paul assured the Philippian church when he said this...

Philippians 1:6

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

If you are saved, you are going to desire to walk with Jesus... Yes...you might stray for a season, but you will come back. So, Jesus is describing someone who is a "professed" believer who has strayed from the faith. They are a sheep that's left the fold and wandered off.

Now, church family, please understand, we're not talking about losing your salvation, because you can't. When you are born again, you are sealed by the Spirit of God and according to Ephesians 1:13-14, you are guaranteed to go to heaven when you die. The question is...are you truly born again? If you are, you will return.

Now, look back at verse 10. This is another verse that has caused great confusion in Christendom through the years. Take a look at it...

Matthew 18:10

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."

"Their angels..." What does that mean? Does that mean we all have "Guardian Angels?" Here's a depiction of that...



That picture depicts a "Guardian Angel" for that little girl, and it's this passage of Scripture that's used to cite the idea that we all have a guardian angel. But pop culture has taught us this...like the famous Christmas movie, "It's a Wonderful Life,"



...where George Bailey has his Guardian Angel, Clarence.

But, we must remember the phrase, "little ones" in verse 10, is speaking of young believers...it's not necessarily talking about a little child.

Now here's the key... The key is the word "their." That word is plural. It's a plural pronoun. So, verse 10 says, "Their angels..." Meaning that NOT every single believer has a Guardian Angel, but that there are angels that care for and watch over all the believers...but, not necessarily AN angel for each individual believer.

You see, looking at the Bible as our guide, not old wives' tales, the Bible teaches us what angels were created to do. They were created by God to minister to believers. See Hebrews...

Hebrews 1:14

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Angels have continuous and open communication with God and the Lord dispatches His angels to come and minister to us. Think about how many times have we entertained angels unaware.

Hebrews 13:2

2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

God sends His angels to minister to us in many ways...ways that we'll likely never fully know or understand. I thought about Daniel the Old Testament prophet. What do you think shut the mouths of the lions...



Could it have been an angel? Sure it could have... In fact, if you read Daniel chapters 9 and 10, you'll see how Michael, the Archangel, came and helped Gabriel to be able to get the prophecy about the End Times to Daniel. It's fascinating!

I heard about a lady (in our church) just last week, who got lost on what she called "never-ending bike trails" near here. She put this picture on Facebook...



...and after 2 hours and 40 minutes, a lady showed up with a dog and told her exactly where to go. Was that an angel? I would have no problem believing it could have

been. But, I don't believe it was her Guardian Angel, because the Scripture doesn't teach that concept.

Now look at verse 10 at something else (and this will really be the heart of the message). This is something that we can run right past if we're not careful. It's the word "despise."

Matthew 18:10a

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

The Greek word for despise is (kataphroneo) and it means to "show contempt, or think nothing of." And it struck me... These disciples have been arguing incessantly about who's going to be the greatest in the kingdom and Jesus is saying, "You guys are despising these young believers who look up to you!" You are showing contempt for them...you are thinking more of yourself than for them. Stop it!

Listen church, when we try to push ourselves up, we'll push others down. Remember, Jesus has a child in his lap as He's teaching and He says, "Humility is the mark of one of His children"...like the unassuming humbleness of the child in His lap.



I thought about that word: **despise** and I thought...yeah...I've seen that word before. It's in one of my favorite Bible verses.

1 Timothy 4:12

¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

So, how do we despise our brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Quickly, I'm going to describe 4 ways.

#1 We flaunt our liberty. We've talked about this the last two weeks. That's where you decide that you'll do what you want to do even if it offends a younger believer. That's Romans 14.

#2 Look Down On Others. That's where we consider other believers beneath us.. This is James, the half-brother of Jesus writing this...

James 2:1-9

¹ My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ² For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," ⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? ⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to

the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

We should not look down on a fellow believer just because they are poor or they aren't held in high esteem by the world. We are to love them unconditionally like all the believers!

#3 Mocking Their Physical Features. Paul was having to defend his ministry to the Corinthian believers. There were those who were actually making fun of Paul's appearance.

2 Corinthians 10:9-10

⁹ I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. ¹⁰ For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."

It's amazing to consider, but there was a faction of the Corinthian believers who were making fun of how Paul looked...like a weakling and how he talked. You see there was a certain oratorical method in that day that professional orators used to WOW crowds. Paul knew how to do it...but, he didn't come with "eloquent speech," but plainly preached the Gospel and they made fun of him...they despised him!

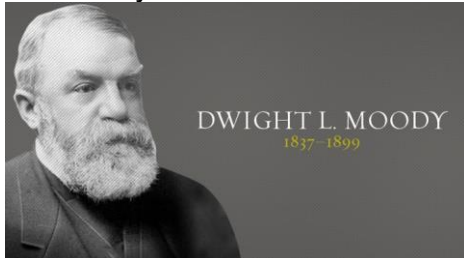
Do you make fun of people because they aren't as educated as you? Do you make fun of people for how they talk? How about how they look? Where they live? What they wear? What school they go to? Do you run people down because they aren't as tan as you, or thin as you? Folks...that's of the devil, and that's despising your brother or sister in Christ!

Romans 12:9-10

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Listen, LOST people are watching how we treat one another as Christians. They are watching what we say and how we treat one another. Let's not despise one another.

I love what the great preacher D.L. Moody did when he went and spoke at Cambridge University in the UK.



Moody was one of the greatest evangelists of all time. He was the Billy Graham of the late 1800's. He only had a 5th grade education, yet he was a brilliant man. He often said: "If this world is going to be reached, I am convinced that it must be done by men and women of average talent." What made Moody different was the fact that he preached a simple message of salvation, but, he began using music prior to his message. He was one of the first evangelists to do this.

Well, he gets to Cambridge University and in the school paper, before he arrived, they were making fun of him and his lack of education. So, when he arose to speak, this is what he said: "Don't let anybody never tell you God don't love you cause He do." The place erupted in laughter

and the reports say, that he had all the listeners in the palm of his hand. Moody spoke on humility and revival broke out at Cambridge. Indeed, Moody had made his point!

Folks, let's never be accused of making fun of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Quite honestly, I've never walked in your shoes and you've never walked in mine. So, let's extend kindness to one another.

#4 **We Reject Their Admonition to Us to Repent**. We'll dive deeper into this next week, but this is huge...because none of us like being told we're wrong. Yet, as we'll see next week, we're to be accountable to one another and one of the ways we do that is to hold each other accountable to the teachings of Jesus. Yet, what do we do? We shoot the messenger don't we! We know they're telling us the truth, but we despise them for doing so!

Once again, the Apostle Paul in dealing with that faction of Corinthian believers who were very carnal says something very sarcastic in 1 Corinthians 4.

1 Corinthians 4:10-15

¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, ¹²and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. ¹⁴I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Don't shoot the messenger. If they come to you in love, then listen to them. If you don't, then you are showing great immaturity and you're despising your brother or sister in Christ.

I want to close today with this thought...

We've talked about how Jesus is the Good Shepherd. We've talked about how Jesus is teaching and training His disciples, His "little ones" and He describes us as His sheep...in this case...in the parable...as sheep that's wandered off. See verses 12 and 13 again...

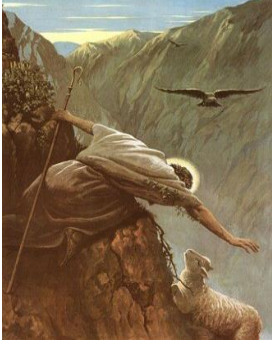
Matthew 18:12-13

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.

Jesus described the man who has 100 sheep. In that day, it meant that man was rich! You know, Jesus is rich too! He owns it all! But, He loves you and He loves me and He can tell if we have gone missing. Why? Because He knows us intimately, not as a number! That shepherd of a flock of 100 didn't count his sheep every night before they bedded down...he knew automatically who was missing.

Listen, if you are a Christian, you are an individual to Jesus, you're not a number...not just one of millions of His children. You MATTER! And if you wander from the fold, He's going to come looking for you! He's going to miss you and He's going to search for you.

Some of you are here today and you are trying to pretend that Jesus isn't pursuing you. Oh but He is! He's like this...



He's not going to give up on you. He's going to keep coming after you! He's going to keep climbing and clawing His way to you. He's coming after you today. He's wanting to save you from ruin! Come home!
