

VI. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Lessons on Evangelism from the Parable of the Lost Sheep”
Luke 15:1–7
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
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Let’s look in Luke 15. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. Luke 15:1–7 says [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.” [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.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Here is something you may not know about me. I love Gospel music and Southern Gospel music. There are certain Gospel groups I like to listen to. One of those is a group called the Hoppers and this is part of the lyrics to their song, *It’s Shouting Time in Heaven*:

*It’s shouting time in heaven,
A sinner once lost is found.
It’s shouting time in heaven,
Salvation has been brought down.
No wonder the angels rejoice to know
My sins have been covered by the crimson flow;
And now I’m feeling fine.
I’m walking on the highway with my Lord,
My name is written down in courts above.
Its shouting time in heaven,
Oh yes, it’s shouting time.*

This song is actually drawn from this passage in Luke and I love what it is saying.

Did you know when the Gospel is shared people come to Christ. It initiates ‘shoutin’ time in heaven for each one of them who come to Christ. Christ and the angels rejoice. All of the friends of Christ rejoice in heaven but not always so on the earth. Sometimes on the earth there is some grumbling and complaining going on particularly among the self-righteous. Think about that. Every time someone comes to Christ according to the Word of God, they rejoice in heaven because of the success of the Gospel that brings lost sinners to Christ.

I have watched that in you as some testimonies have been shared recently that shows how the Lord has saved people and used them in other people’s lives. I see how we respond to that and I’m grateful that I see at Briarwood, not only to recognize when people come to Christ that it’s shouting time in heaven or at least we applaud it but the unmistakable joy in their soul when God had used them and someone had come to Christ. So it wasn’t just in heaven that rejoicing

was taking place but it was right in their own heart and life. Interestingly, that is what we are lined up with this year.

We are asking God to give us a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Our lifestyle is not evangelism. Our lifestyle can open a door, illustrate evangelism or close a door for evangelism but it's not evangelism because people don't go to heaven admiring our life. They go to heaven through a personal relationship with Christ that comes by faith and faith comes by hearing. Evangelism is to create a lifestyle where we're constantly seeking God for those moments where we can share the Gospel.

We have called it the five E's – Everyone evangelizing everybody everywhere every day. We are to always be ready saying 'God, show me those Divine appointments that you are raising up. God, give me the boldness to compassionately, humbly yet courageously share the Good News that Jesus saves sinners and that You would work that in my life.' Yes, there are those who are gifted at evangelism but all of us evangelize. Another 'E' that you can put with that is that '**each** one causes a party in heaven and becomes an occasion for shouting time in heaven.'

I want to go to a number of passages of Scriptures to expositionally share with you our ministry theme. We are now at Luke 15 and the three parables that Christ gives in response to a charge, criticism, or complaint that was given against Him. The first two verses in Luke 15 is the background for the three parables that we're about to look at. Luke 15:1–2 says *[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."*

Luke is very adept at doing something in his Gospel biography of Jesus. He gives us a number of occasions where Jesus interacted with the Scribes and the Pharisees when they were trying to trap Him or question Him or grumbling about Him or when they brought charges against Him. In the next study we'll look at Mark 2 where a tax collector gets converted, creates an event to share the Gospel and while Jesus is talking with the people that need the Gospel through the event, Matthew (Levi) creates the complaint saying the same thing the Pharisees just grumbled about in Luke 15:2. So how does Jesus answer this charge?

Jesus answers this charge with three parables. These parables are all similar in that they all deal with something lost that gets found and it creates joy by those who went looking for it and found it. In this study we will look at the lost sheep. In the next we will look at the lost coin and following that we will look at the lost son. All three parables are designed to answer the charge that has been brought to Jesus from the tax collectors and Pharisees. Jesus is being criticized for welcoming and eating with sinners and yet He came looking for those people. They are lost and He came to find them. When We find them we rejoice. All three parables will have a similar message but they are not just repetition for they also build on each other.

The parable we will look at in this study is giving us the precept/principle of the lost being sought, found and joy. In the next parable we'll find out the process of that which is lost to find it and rejoice. In the third parable we will see the promise that God fulfills when those who are sought are found and we rejoice over them.

Jesus uses this parable of the lost sheep at least two times because it is recorded in Matthew and here in the book of Luke. Jesus gives the one recorded in Matthew to His Disciples when He is trying to teach them something. In Luke He gives it in response to the Pharisees and Scribes. I say at least two times because I think Jesus is like some of us preachers that when something works you are liable to use it more than one time and perhaps several times at that. So I think He could have used this other times while He was here on this earth.

So why would Jesus use this parable? Now Jesus is the son of a carpenter but He loves to talk about being a shepherd. He loves to show the Chief Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, Christ our Shepherd. One reason I think He liked to use this so much was because that was embedded in the prophecies of the Messiah where the Messiah would be a Shepherd. When David speaks of the Messiah who would save us in Psalm 23 he starts off, 'The Lord (the Messiah) is my (our) Shepherd. He nurtures us. He causes us to lie down. He feeds us by still waters. He restores our soul. We would wander but He stays with us even through the valley of the shadow of death. David also used this in Psalm 28:9 which says *[9] Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.* Then in Ezekiel 34, Ezekiel in his prophecy says that the Messiah will be a Shepherd and seek the lost sheep, those that are straying and will bring them home. He will cause them to lie down and feed them in the truth of His Word.

So when they bring a complaint to Him that He can't be the Messiah because He receives, welcomes and eats with sinners here in Luke, He says that He not only does that but He tells them why they are drawing near to Him. This charge is based on those that draw near to Him and when they do that He doesn't withdraw from them but He welcomes and receives them yet more than that He sits down at a table with them to eat from the same utensils and food as they do. This is horrendous to the Pharisees and Scribes because first of all their view was you are pure based on what you didn't touch so that what happens to you externally is what happens to you internally. Yet Jesus will tell them that it's from the heart that the issues flow.

He has already shown then that what is externally unclean cannot contaminate that which is internally clean because Jesus has touched many lepers who are unclean and healed them. They didn't contaminate Him but He cleansed and redeemed them. The sinners that you touch don't contaminate us but it's the sin within us that contaminates us. Their view like most self-righteous is that it is all on the outside. He had already shown them that and now He tells them why they draw near to Him. They draw near to Him because He came looking for them. Christ is the Shepherd and the Messiah Shepherd goes after the lost, those who have strayed to seek them. When He finds them He brings them to lie down and then He feeds them. So He is doing this because He loves to speak of Himself this way. He wants to point out to them that the fact that He is welcoming sinners is not a mark against Him as Messiah but it is the evidence that He is the Messiah because the Messiah would be such a Shepherd. So it is no surprise He would take on this first parable as Him being the Shepherd.

Now, there are three groups of people here as He tells this parable. One is unnamed and I confess this is speculation but even though the Disciples are not identified as being there I am sure they are there. Jesus is there and I'm sure His Disciples are there but then it names two other groups that are there. One is called the tax gatherers and sinners and the other group is the Scribes and Pharisees. Who are the Scribes and Pharisees? It's probably best pointed out in the Gospel of Luke. Luke 18:11–12 says *[11] The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. [12] I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess* (KJV). And he went away self-righteously justifying himself.

The passage goes on to say about the sinner in Luke 18:13–14a, *[13] And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [14a] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other...* Pharisees and Scribes become identified by Jesus with two things. One is hypocrites where they say one thing but in life are doing something else in reality

in another life – not the one you see but the one they are living. Secondly, they are the self-righteous who think they can justify themselves with their work and like all self-righteous people they can't possibly stand anybody that doesn't do as well as they do. So they have this disdain for the sinners because they don't see themselves as sinners. They see themselves as righteous and therefore their self-righteousness is manifested as arrogance instead of the humility as one who is truly saved by grace.

So who would tax gatherers and sinners be? A tax gatherer was particularly loathsome to the Jews of that day because they were a Jew that had gone to work for the Romans to collect taxes from the Jews to give to the Romans but the Romans didn't pay them. The Jews who collected taxes for the Romans from the Jews did not get paid but were expected to steal, by collecting it off the top as they created a top which was thievery. That's why when the tax collector gets saved he would say to Jesus 'I'll go back and pay what I stole.' So they charged the people they were getting taxes from more than what they had to collect for the Romans in order to make money for themselves so they were stealing from those they were collecting taxes from. So the other Jews would look at the tax collector as a thief and a traitor.

Secondly, sinners became a catch-all phrase to speak of those who did sins of immorality, particularly adulterers and prostitutes and others. So Jesus not only received the tax collectors but He received the adulterers and prostitutes at His Table as well. This is the charge they are bringing against Him. So how is Jesus going to answer this charge that He receives, welcomes and eats with these people? He answers it through this parable of the lost sheep.

So Jesus starts out this parable with a rhetorical question in Luke 15:3–4 which says [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?"* I want to say that the position that I have finally arrived at with this parable many of the commentators do not take this position I'm about to share. I'm not the only one that takes this position but it's not the majority. I think the answer to the rhetorical question is 'none.'

Let's go back to the fact that He is now comparing us to sheep. Sheep are dumb to the third power. Measured on the scale of animals their brainwaves are so minimized they don't know where to go or what to do. They kind of walk in a herd but they are always wandering off. If you don't have a shepherd you will lose that sheep. They are also defenseless because they have no tooth or claw. We are sheep and therefore we are dumb and before Satan alone we're defenseless. We are like sheep and we need a Shepherd.

In this parable a man has 100 sheep and one wanders away. Who goes after the one sheep? It is the one who doesn't have any sense himself. It doesn't say he has help with those 100 sheep or any assistant shepherds and leaves them in the open country to go find the one that wanders away. 'Open country' here is the same word that is used in the Greek for wilderness so this is a translation of that. Do you know what the 99 will do while you're gone? They are going to leave so that when you get back you won't have any but according to this parable they don't leave so I think the answer to the rhetorical question should be that 'none' would leave. You would think the shepherd would say 'I'm not going to lose 99 by going to look for that one' but Jesus does go after the one.

Jesus says he goes looking for the one sheep until he finds it and does not stop until he finds it. Then he brings the lost one back. Luke 15:5–6 says [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.'* I

believe this parable is saying that you know what most shepherds would do when one wanders away, they cut their loss. Jesus doesn't do that for He goes after it to seek it and seeks it till He finds it. When He finds it He will bring it home. It will not get home on its own. Jesus will carry it on His shoulders for it can't get home unless He brings it home, all the way and all the way He is rejoicing over it. Then He has His family and friends rejoice with Him.

Then Jesus says that instead of the grumbling on earth like the Scribes and Pharisees it is shouting time in heaven as it says in Luke 15:7, *[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.* The 99 are the ones here grumbling who think they need no repentance, those who don't need to be found, turned around and brought home.

So there are two implications here that I want you to see and then I'll give you the takeaway. Let's look at ourselves from this parable. The first implication is, as sinners who are apart from Christ, we like sheep are lost, wandering senselessly and are unable to save ourselves. So how many of you are sinners? We are all sinners. I can't tell you the number of people who have walked away in sin from a marriage, a family and the faith they once professed and the one broken in my office says 'Pastor, please help me understand.' I try to help them see the occasion and what influenced all of that but I always end up saying 'I can't help you understand. Sin doesn't make sense.'

If you don't yet know Christ, you're only reading this today because He sought you and we welcome you. We love you and we know what it means to be apart from Christ and living life senselessly. Sin never makes sense. It is irrational, illogical and utterly destructive. That is where we are apart from Christ and that means we need to be found because we are unable to save ourselves. That brings me to the second implication.

The second implication, we are not only in need of Christ to seek us and save us, but we are also dependent upon Him to bring us home. We are senselessly wandering lost in our sin and then Christ pursues us and finds us. He empowers His church to arise. Put the armor on. Give strength to every stride and they come in the power of the Spirit looking for us with a message from God. They are on a mission from God. Then Christ Himself begins to speak to our hearts and when we're ready He seeks us, finds us and brings us home but we won't get home unless He carries us. The Good Shepherd says "I'll be with you every day until your home."

Here is this glorious truth as Jesus welcomes, receives and eats with them for they will be brought to His Table. I will bring them Home and they will sit at the Marriage Table with Me and eat with Me forever. I will do that for I'm their Shepherd.

So here's the takeaway. Christ the Shepherd, receives and welcomes lost sinners because He came to seek them, find them, and bring them home rejoicing, and all who love Him rejoice with Him and they join Him in seeking the lost to bring them home. I would give anything to preach and 3,000 get up and come to Jesus but don't despise personal evangelism. Every time you by the Spirit of God seek a lost person, God uses you and they're found. They come to Christ and Christ puts them on His shoulders with the power of the Spirit and the Word of God to start bringing them home. They begin to eat with Christ from His Word and at His Table. Every time each one of them is found there is a party in heaven.

We don't have to wait to get to the party in heaven for we can throw a party here and rejoice. We're not going to grumble like Scribes and Pharisees. We lift up praise to Him as we hear it in testimonies and the joy that fills your heart as you hear it. We not only have Christ the Shepherd but we have Christ the Good Shepherd. Christ the Shepherd seeks us, finds us, brings us and rejoices over us because Christ the Shepherd is Christ the Good Shepherd. The Good

Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep to save us and that's why He seeks us, finds us, brings us and rejoices over us.

Christ the Good Shepherd brings us home. We who live senselessly in our sin, who wander in the emptiness of our idolatry going everywhere but to the Lord to find life, who live in the lostness of our rebellion, the Good Shepherd, Christ, lays down His life at the cross to die for our sins and then goes to a tomb and is raised. He rises to heaven and from the throne this Good Shepherd now sends His Spirit. I love the way Rolfe Barnard, a Baptist preacher put it, "The risen Savior sends the Bloodhound of heaven to track us down" and He'll lose not one that He redeemed at the cross. The Bloodhound of heaven comes to them through you as the Spirit of God speaks through the Gospel that you take and share with people.

It is the Spirit of God who works through you. It is the Sovereign God who selected you, sought you, saved you and now sends you. Five times Jesus sums all of this up. I love the one from Luke 19:10 that says *[10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.* Now from heaven He still seeks to save the lost for He says to us in John 20:21, *[21] "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."* He was sent to seek and save the lost and now He sends you. We go to seek and to save the lost for our Savior who through others came to seek us that we might be saved. He is Christ our Shepherd, our Good Shepherd who laid down His life for us to save us now sends us. Oh what a Savior!

He is the Seeker of sinners to save us from our sins, sending us in the name of Christ, by the power of Christ, with the message of Christ. Come, Jesus loves you. Turn from your sin for He welcomes you. Come, eat with Him forever and He'll bring you home. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You kind Savior for Your work of grace. Just reading this today is the evidence that He has sought you and brought you. He is ready to save you. It is a trustworthy statement Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners for He came to seek and save those who are lost. If you say 'no' to the myths of self-righteousness that say 'I can be right with God on my own' and 'yes' to Christ the Shepherd who laid down His life for you and sent His Spirit through His people to you, then I invite you to call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to personally and confidentially pray with you. You may even call me personally here at the church but what I want to invite you to, is Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who has sought you, who will bring you home, who died on the cross for you. Come to Him who came for you. Father, would You please be in our hearts and our lives for we have gathered today in Your Word to praise You, Father, for sending Your Son who came to seek and to save the lost, who now sends us as You sent Him to seek and to save the lost. So as we who are gathered scatter, may we seek the lost that they might know the Savior and be saved, for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

TWO IMPLICATIONS

1. As sinners, we like sheep are lost, wandering senselessly and unable to save ourselves.
2. We are not only in need of Christ to seek us and find us, we are also dependent upon Him to bring us home.

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Christ the Shepherd receives and welcomes lost sinners because He came to seek them, find them, and bring them home rejoicing, and all who love Him rejoice with Him and then they join Him.

Christ the Shepherd – Christ the Good Shepherd