

“The Model Citizen – Part III”

One Lost Sheep

Matt 18:v10-14

Scripture Ref: John 10:11-14; 1 COr 10:13; Rom 8:34; Ez 34:16; Jer 32:17; Luke 15:13-32

- 1. As we come to part 3 in our series “the model citizen”**
 - a. Part I – the dangers of pride**
 - b. Part II – the dangers of leading others astray**
 - c. Part III – Those who do stray...**

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. 11 For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

12 "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? 13 And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. 14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Background - What is “Straying?”

- 2. We use this term often in Christian vernacular – someone “strayed” from the Lord, but what does it really mean?**
 - a. I don’t think Jesus is describing the non-believer.**
 - b. Remember last week we learned that the bible often describes believers as “little ones” or “little children”**
 - c. Well the bible also describes Christians as “sheep”, and Jesus as “The Shepherd”**
 - d. Jesus discourse in John 10 paints the entire picture:**

John 10:11-14

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

- 3. Sometimes one of the sheep will wander away from the protection of the flock and the shepherd.**
 - a. And that is a picture of the Christian that strays from the Lord**

- b. It's a picture of leaving the protection of the church and the Lord, and wandering back out into the world, going back to their life before Christ.
4. Why would a Christian stray?
- a. Sometimes we get 'convenient amnesia', and we forget how much pain and suffering sin brought – we decide to give it another try.
 - b. Some people grew up in a good home, never really got involved in the pleasures of the world, and they think they “missed out” on all that stuff.
 - c. Some are lured by someone that seems appealing
 - d. Maybe lured away from the flock by a wolf in sheep's clothing!
 - e. Some are not fellowshipping with the rest of the flock, and they lose their sense of belonging.
5. So what is God's perspective of this situation? How does God feel about the Christian that strays?
- a. That is the purpose of Jesus statements here – to help us see God's heart for the Christian that strays...

#1 God's Love is Unconditional

6. Now any shepherd will tell you that sheep - are pretty dumb animals – that's why they occasionally wander away from the protection of the flock and the shepherd.
- a. And when it happens, God doesn't look at that person and think *“that dumb sheep, I can't believe he wandered away. He should know better. Perhaps he'll learn his lesson out there and then next time he'll stay close to the flock!”*
 - b. No – Gods love is *independent of our obedience.*
7. That is a hard concept to get our minds around, because our love and acceptance of one another is often conditional.
- a. As long as you are living how I think you should live, then “I love you bro...” – but let a Christian stray off the reservation and our attitude can change.
 - b. Unfortunately the church is known for shooting their wounded!
 - c. Or when someone comes back to the fold – there is penance to pay!
 - d. But God is not like that – His love never changes
8. So if God loves us the same whether we obey or not, why not stray? Why not go check out all those other valleys and pastures?
- a. Because ...it's a dangerous world out there.
 - b. There are wolves that seek to prey on sheep
 - c. There are pastures out there that look appealing, but in fact are poisonous.

- d. There are thickets that you can get snared in, and not be able to get out of.
- 9. I have said this repeatedly, I have yet to meet the Christian that strayed, and said “Man, I sure am glad I strayed – it was so awesome!”
 - a. No, its always the opposite – when they came back, IF they come back, there are broken bones, bruises, things that must be healed
 - b. Over time, we find that it is better to just stay close to the Shepherd!

#2 God’s Love is Individual

...does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying

- 10. In other words, God loves each one of us *as if we were the only one.*
 - a. We have four children in our home, and I tell you it can be difficult to spread your love and attention between all of them!
 - b. But God is what we call “omnipresent” – in other words He can multitask on a global level!
 - c. He is “omniscient” – He can know everything all at once!
 - d. He can keep track of what is going on with my life, your live, and 6 billion other people – at the same time!
- 11. So – when one of His sheep strays off the pasture, He is totally aware of it! (in other words, you cant sneak out!)
 - a. When He sees us starting to move closer to the edge of the pasture, He’ll usually send over another sheep to draw us back.
 - i. But maybe we disregard that brother or sister in the Lord, and we keep edging out.
 - b. If that doesn’t work He’ll often send one of his shepherds – perhaps a pastor – perhaps something said on Sunday morning - to try and draw us back
 - i. But we can disregard that – and continue to go further out
 - c. Then He’ll often put up roadblocks – things that block our path, something that will be a guide back

1 Cor 10:13 ...God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape...

- d. But we can jump over the obstacles, drive around the roadblocks, and keep heading off the reservation!

12. And when we are out – when we are totally cut off from the flock, out in the wilderness, God is not blind - He see's our situation and He is still working in our lives.

a. Jesus the Good Shepherd is still at His post – praying for us...

Rom 8:34 ...who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

b. And... He comes after us!

Ezekiel 34:16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick:

13. Fact: You cannot run from God! Some of us try, but His arm is longer than we can run!

Jer 32:17 'Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.

a. How does He get us back? Simple, He'll give us the freedom to run as far as we want – and when we get there, guess what – it's not what we thought it would be.

b. And when we come to the end of ourselves – God is there waiting!

14. Ref – The Prodigal Son - Luke 15:13-32

#3 God's love is Emotional

... And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray

15. in other words – look at the emotion that the Shepherd experiences when that lost sheep is brought back – JOY!

a. One of the things that tends to keep a person from returning to the fold of God's people after straying away is – SHAME.

b. We feel shame, we've let people down, we are afraid we'll be judged, or looked down upon.

c. But here's the thing – we need understand that with God there is never a need to feel shame – because God REJOICES when one of His children returns!

d. HE rejoices because He loves us! He rejoices because He is not keeping score, or looking down at us, or holding us in judgment!

- e. He is just totally stoked that we have returned! He is overjoyed because His heart is FOR US – He wants ONLY GOOD for us –
- 16. Maybe you are here this morning and you have strayed, and your not sure that God wants you back – you can hold your head up and be encouraged –**
- a. God has His arms open wide, He has a ring for your finger, He has prepared a feast!
- 17. Maybe you know someone that is wandering in the wilderness – you need to encourage them with this message**
- a. God knows their situation!
 - b. God is coming for them!
 - c. God wants to bring them back into His fold!
 - d. And God will rejoice at their return!

The Straying Sheep

Lost from the Savior's fold!
Upon the lonely mountain, They shiver with the cold:
Within the tangled thickets,
Where poison vines do creep,
And over rocky ledges
Still roam the poor lost sheep.

O come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam.
At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say:
"I have brought some lost one home."

O who will go to find them?
Who, for the Savior's sake,
Will search with tireless patience
Through brier and through brake
Unheeding thirst or hunger,
Who still from day to day,
Will seek, as for treasure,
The sheep that go astray?

O come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam.
At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say:
"I have brought some lost one home."

Say, will you seek to find them?
From pleasant bow'rs of ease
Will you go forth determined
To find the least of these?
For still the Savior calls them,
And looks across the wold,
And still He holds wide open
The door into His fold.

O come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam.
At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say:
"I have brought some lost one home."

How sweet 'twould be at evening
If you and I could say,

"Good Shepherd we've been seeking
The sheep that went astray!
Heartsore and faint with hunger,
We heard them making moan,
And lo! we come at nightfall,
And bear them safely home."

O come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam.
At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say:
"I have brought some lost one home."

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