

PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

Luke 15:1-7

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. [Gal. 6:1]

Luke explains the origin of this parable: *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."* [vv. 1-2] Scorned by the religious elite, the outcasts of society come to hear Jesus teach. The scribes and Pharisees cannot understand why our Lord would allow himself to be contaminated by their presence.



Jesus uses this parable to convey the depth of God's love; the mingled tenderness, sorrow and majesty of His desire to reach out to the lost.

The main theme is that each of us matters to the Lord, no matter what our situation may be. God's great heart is moved to compassion for anyone who is lost. The flock is his dear possession, so God is concerned whenever any of us stray. For that reason, He will not rest until every one of his lost sheep has been found and returned.

Then the scene changes. When one of his own comes home, the Lord's great joy is shared among myriad hosts of angels. All of Heaven rejoices with Him! The Apostle writes, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst."* [I Tim. 1:15] Not only that, He gave his life for us! *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* [Rom. 5:8]

The Psalmist gives this assurance, *"Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."* [Ps. 100:3] Kingdom disciples understand the Lord's great mission, to send them in search of each one of His lost sheep. *"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost."* [Luke 19:10] The great work of the Church is to rescue, save and return all those who belong to the Lord, no matter where they may have strayed or where they might be found. We are accountable to God for this task! As Jesus says, *"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."* [Mat. 18:10]

