

Sermon: The Uncommon Sense of Searching for One

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Think, if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the 99 on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?

And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the 99 that never went astray. So it is not the will of my father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for the opportunity to study your word today. Lord, we pray where each and every person watching this today, right where they are, God, that you would meet them here, that you would speak to them through your word.

[2 : 16] God, that you would help us understand more uncommon sense of the kingdom of God, that we might, as your people, walk through life according to your wisdom and not the wisdom of the world.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. It was a long 10-hour flight to Russia for seven-year-old Artem.

Artem boarded the plane. He was taken to his seat by the flight attendant. When he realized something that terrified him, he was alone.

His mother wasn't seated in the seat next to him. His father hadn't boarded the plane with him. No, he was all alone on the plane with a note pinned inside his jacket which read, quote, I no longer want to parent this child.

You see, Artem had been adopted by a woman by the name of Tori Hanson. Tori, after a few months of adopting Artem, realized that he was a little more than she had bargained for.

[3 : 37] Artem had behavioral problems. He had psychiatric issues. And before long, this became something that Tori did not want to handle.

In fact, her mother, Tori's mother, was interviewed by a reporter. And in the interview, her mother said this, quote, Tori wanted a little boy she could love.

But Artem wasn't the one. He was like a pair of pants that didn't fit, close quote.

So Tori bought Artem a ticket on the plane back to Russia, told him that he was going on vacation, and then put him on the plane with the hopes of never seeing him again.

Now, faith family, it's not my attempt in any way to speak with authority on Tori's situation. It's certainly not my attempt to cast any judgment on anybody that's been through a difficult situation like that.

[4 : 48] I share that story because it really illustrates, it's an example of the way a lot of people tend to approach other people or approach life.

So, for instance, a common way that people will approach life is this. If you see somebody that doesn't bring any value to you, if you come across someone that doesn't appear to be of benefit to you, the easy thing to do is dismiss them, to get rid of them, to send them back.

And, of course, there are examples of this all throughout life. You know this. For instance, if the athlete doesn't have the talent, well, just cut him.

If the employee doesn't really fit, just fire them. If you don't like the product, just return it. If someone has a different opinion, just tune them out.

If the person looks different than you, just cast judgment on them. In other words, faith family, a very common approach to life is this.

[6 : 08] If you do not find any value in the show, just turn the channel. That's a very common way that people approach life.

Cut bait. Cut your losses. Move on. Don't waste your time. But the problem with this approach towards people, the problem with this approach towards life, is that it creates a status of significance that is contrary to the very kingdom of God.

When that's the kind of approach that you take towards people or towards life, what ends up happening is that the blessed are valued and the broken are overlooked.

We celebrate the attractive and we ignore the alone. We elevate the popular and we devalue the poor.

We honor the celebrity and belittle the child. And that common approach to life, an approach that we see everywhere in our culture, we see all kinds of people that approach life this way, is that that approach is exactly the mindset that Jesus exposes in this parable.

[7 : 43] As he teaches us the uncommon sense of the kingdom, a way of approaching people and life that runs contrary to the way we do that in this world.

Now, this parable that we just read is known as the parable of the lost sheep. And Jesus actually teaches this parable on two different occasions.

In Matthew chapter 18, which we just read a few moments ago, and also in Luke chapter 15. And so I want us to understand the context of both of those examples where Jesus tells this story.

Let's begin with Matthew chapter 18, which is what we read a few moments ago. Look back at verse 1. This is the context from which Jesus tells this parable of the lost sheep.

Verse 1 of chapter 18 says this, At that time, the disciples came to Jesus saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom?

[8 : 55] So the question that's being asked in this context is, Who is the greatest? And that question is being asked by none other than the very disciples of Jesus.

They are, and they are often this way in the Gospels, they are consumed with personal rank. Who gets shotgun? Who gets the biggest piece of cake?

Who gets the best seat in the house? They are constantly consumed with, Am I greater than this guy? Am I the greatest in the kingdom?

That's what they're asking. And as a result of that question, Jesus then brings in a child. Look at verse 2.

And calling to him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, Truly I say to you, Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

[9 : 59] Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. In other words, Jesus here says to the disciples who are asking the question, Who's the greatest?

That if you don't humble yourself like a child, you cannot understand the kingdom of God. Indeed, you can't even enter into the kingdom of God.

Now that ought to make us, faith families, stop and say, Okay, this is really important. Whatever Jesus is teaching here is significant because we want to be a part of God's kingdom.

Now, Jesus here in saying this is not suggesting that children are humble in their behavior. In fact, we know children are anything but humble.

In fact, all of the evidence you need is to have children. We know these are not humble creatures. They are vipers in diapers, right?

[11 : 03] They can terrorize things. It's not that they're humble in behavior. That's not the point that Jesus is making. The reason we don't often get the point is because we live in a different culture than the one Jesus is teaching this in.

In our culture today, children rule the roost. They are the center of the family universe. Now that's a whole other sermon for a whole other day, but that's reality.

Like everything revolves around the schedule of the children, the activities of the children. We are often a very child-focused culture. That was not the case in the ancient Near East.

Not at all. The children were not the center of things at all. In fact, children had no status in society. They had no rights. They had no privileges.

His children were like at the bottom of the social ladder. And why was that the case? Because they had nothing to contribute in society.

[12 : 11] And so they were seen as lesser. In fact, and I don't have a lot of time here, but let me just hear it quickly. Certainly in Roman culture back in these days, it was very common for children or babies to be tossed off on the side of the street.

In fact, one of the things that made Christians unique early on was that they cared for children. But in this context, children were not seen as anything that had privilege or status in society.

So here's the point. So faith, family, look right here. What Jesus is teaching the disciples here is this uncommon sense. The uncommon sense of the kingdom, which is the valuable in the kingdom are those who add no value.

The ones that are really valuable, you're asking who's the greatest, disciples. The ones who are really valuable add no value.

aren't seen as having any value. That is who Jesus says is the greatest in the kingdom.

[13 : 28] That is very uncommon and not how the system of our world approaches things. So that's the first context, Matthew chapter 18.

Here's the second context of which Jesus tells this parable. It's found in Luke chapter 15. Look at Luke 15 and verse 1.

It says, Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to him and the, note, Pharisees and scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

So faith family, look right here. Very different context. Context number one in Matthew 18 is the disciples who are asking, Who is the greatest? The second context in Luke 15 is not the disciples, it's the Pharisees and the scribes basically asking, Who should even be in the kingdom?

Not who is the greatest in the kingdom, but who should even be in the kingdom. Because at this point in Jesus' ministry, He has gained quite the following and people have begun to take notice as to who is following Jesus.

[14 : 53] And needless to say, these are not the who's who of Palestinian society. They were social outcasts, the poor. They were sexual outcasts, the prostitute.

They were political outcasts, the tax collector. Faith family, if Jesus' ministry were to be scripted in Hollywood, it would not have this cast of characters.

This is not the entourage you would want following Jesus if you were trying to build something that's popular. You might call this group of people, I don't know, like a basket of deplorables or something like that.

This is not the accepted of society. And yet Jesus eats with them. He not only invites them over, He invites them to the table.

So here, faith family, in Luke 15, Jesus is teaching, not the disciples, but the Pharisees and the scribes, the uncommon sense of the kingdom in this.

[16 : 06] Those accepted in the kingdom are those rejected by the world. Those, because the question is, who gets in?

I can't believe He's eating with people like this. Who would associate with people like this? And what Jesus is teaching them is those to whom the world rejects is who the kingdom receives.

Now, those are the two contexts, Matthew 18 and Luke 15, of which this parable is taught. Question one, who's the greatest in the kingdom?

Those that have no value like children. Question two, who should be in the kingdom? Those who are outcast and the reject of society. And in those two contexts, Jesus tells this story.

Look at Matthew 18 and verse 12. Matthew 18 verse 12. What do you think, Jesus says, if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray?

[17 : 17] Now, Jesus here brings up a parable about sheep. Very, very common animal, something that would be very understood and known and common to those to whom Jesus is teaching this.

But we tend to think about sheep as these very cute and cuddly and fluffy kind of animals. But of course, that's not the image that we should have here at all.

Four quick things that you'll notice here about sheep. These are things that probably many of you will know, but it's worth going over. First of all, sheep are dumb. Sheep are dumb.

You've never seen one fetch. You throw a stick and it just stands there and stares, right? According to the scripture, they're about as useless as cats.

Okay, we all know that to be true. Sheep have absolutely no idea where they're going. They're always getting lost. Sheep are not smart.

[18 : 21] They're not intelligent animals. That's why they're constantly wandering off and getting into trouble. They may think they're smart, but they're actually deceived by their own stupidity.

So first of all, sheep are dumb. Secondly, is they lack discernment. They lack discernment. What I mean by that is they're led by their appetites.

If they see green grass somewhere, they don't really care if there's any danger involved. They just want to get that grass. And so that appetite will lead them astray.

They don't have any discernment about their surroundings. A third thing is that they're defenseless. They're defenseless. They're an easy meal.

They don't really put up a fight. If you've ever, you know, watched an episode on Animal Planet or something like that that involved sheep, odds are it didn't go well for the sheep.

[19 : 26] Okay? It usually doesn't turn out good for them because they're not a very vicious, fighting kind of animal. They're defenseless.

It's why you've never seen a sports team with the mascot, the fighting sheep. I mean, that's not very threatening at all. Lions, tigers, bears, sure, but sheep?

In fact, sheep are so non-threatening, you have your children count them to go to sleep. You don't do that with wolves. You don't like, alright little Johnny, go count wolves and go to sleep.

No, that'd be a counseling bill, right? But sheep are so non-threatening, they're so defenseless, we count them to go to bed. A fourth thing here is they're always in danger.

In fact, it's because they're not all that intelligent, it's because they lack discernment, and it's because they're defenseless, that they're always in danger. Sheep need 24-7 protection by the shepherd.

[20 : 36] Well, guess who the Bible compares us to? Isaiah 53, verse 6, And we, like sheep, have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to His own way. How many of you listening to this right now have ever made a mess of your life?

How many of you listening right now have ever made decisions that you regret? How many of you listening right now have ever tried to go your own way?

How many of you listening have ever been led by your appetites to make decisions that you wish you could undo?

We are like sheep who have gone astray. Always searching for the next patch of grass to find fulfillment in our life.

[21 : 49] Jesus talks about sheep here, and yet the Bible associates us in the same way. My question is, what do you do with people like that?

You know, the people who wander off. The people that have wrecked their life. The people that have made bad decisions. You get rid of them, right? Isn't that the common sense?

You just get rid of them. Or you fire them. Or you at least make them ride in the back seat on the bus. Or you put them on a plane and send them back.

But isn't that what you do with people like that? That's what the Pharisees would say. The Pharisees would say, I mean, people like that, sheep-like people don't belong in the kingdom of God.

The disciples would say, okay, maybe sheep-like people get in the kingdom, but they certainly won't be the greatest in the kingdom.

[22 : 51] Look at verse 12 again. What do you think if a man had 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?

This is what's so uncommon. At least when you think about it in the way most people of the world would approach it. You got ninety-nine. One, forget the one.

Cut your losses, man. Who cares about the one when you've got ninety-nine? And yet, what Jesus is saying here is, here you have a shepherd that doesn't cut his losses.

Here you have a shepherd that doesn't say, well, I've still got ninety-nine. Who cares about that one stupid sheep? I mean, it wasn't obedient like these other ninety-nine. It wasn't good like these other ninety-nine.

It wasn't quite acceptable as these other ninety-nine. Why would I waste my time on that one? And yet, Jesus says, the shepherd not only goes after the one, but he finds the one, and when he finds the one, he throws a party.

[24 : 07] And this is what is so uncommon sense about the kingdom. Because common sense in the world is who cares about the one percent? If you're in politics, you gladly take a ninety-nine percent vote.

If you're in school, you gladly take a test score of ninety-nine percent, unless you're like some big nerd, okay? If you're in sports, you gladly take a ninety-nine percent winning record.

So why is the shepherd so willing to leave ninety-nine and go after this one? Let me illustrate.

How many of you have ever lost something before? Anybody ever lost anything? Show of hands, how many of you have lost a purse or a wallet? How many of you have ever lost your mind?

Okay. Some of you have not found that yet. All of us can relate to the feeling of losing something. But have you ever noticed that you search for different things differently?

[25 : 15] So for example, how many have ever lost something like this? Well, it's a penny. You've got all kinds of them in the floorboard of your car or in the cushions on your couch.

You don't really go around searching all that greatly for a penny. How many of you have lost something like this? A pair of car keys. You know, maybe you're running late and you've got a little bit more of a sense of panic than you would for a penny.

How many of you have lost something like this? Oh, now we're starting to get serious. Like, you can't lose your cell phone. I mean, that's expensive expensive to replace.

That's something that you lose your cell phone like your world begins to crumble. Or how many of you have lost something like this? Now we're talking big dollars.

Right? You start losing significant money and now you're even more concerned. How many of you have ever lost something like this? That's right.

[26 : 16] If you've never lost a kid, it just means you don't have one. If you're a parent, you have a kid, you have lost that kid at some point. Okay? And the reality is when you lose a kid, like maybe they're misplaced at the grocery store, I mean, that heart begins to thump and you're nervous and you're panicking and it's a totally different experience than if you lost a penny.

Why is that? Notice this on the screen. Your willingness to search is directly related to the value of what is lost. Your willingness and urgency to search is related to the value of what is lost.

You search with intensity when something of great value is lost. You see, all you see, disciples, is a child.

All you see, Pharisees, is a prostitute. All you see, world, is a dumb, lost sheep. But that's the kind of people that Jesus left the glories of heaven to save and to rescue because that's the uncommon sense of God.

Contrary to the common sense of the world, God receives little ones. God eats with sinners. God rescues sheep.

[27 : 44] And why is that the case? Because God loves the things nobody else finds lovely. God loves the things nobody else finds lovely.

Faith family, please hear me. The blessed are not the popular. The blessed are the poor in spirit. spirit. That's the uncommon sense of the kingdom of God.

And in Luke 15, 4, it says when Jesus tells this story there, that the shepherd looks for that sheep until he finds it. He doesn't just look for a few hours and say, I'm tired.

He doesn't say, oh, it's about to get dark. He does whatever it takes to bring that sheep home. The search may be long, but this shepherd is compelled by love.

Now, what does that parable of the lost sheep teach us? What are the things that we should learn from this? Just a few things that you'll notice here.

[29 : 00] Number one is that this teaches us about the heart of humanity. The heart of humanity. Faith family, you know this, we are prone to wonder.

Prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. That's every single one of us. And as long as we're like the disciples, as long as we're like the Pharisees, and we think we're part of the 99, right, we're the ones that got it all together.

We're the ones that were obedient to the shepherd will never really understand the kingdom. You're never going to understand the depths of God's saving grace until you realize the condition of your own heart.

We are lost without him. And until you realize that you are lost, you're never going to be found. And if you're here and you're listening to me today and you're listening to God's word today, and you would be willing to say, Pastor, I know I'm lost.

I have wandered from God. My sin has separated me from him. Would you just acknowledge that? Would you stop acting like you got it all together?

[30 : 25] Like the 99? Like the disciples? Like the Pharisees? And just be willing to say, my heart has wandered. Jesus, my shepherd, would you find me?

Here I am. And not only teaches us the heart of humanity, but secondly, it teaches us the heart of ministry. The heart of ministry. Oh, faith family, if I had two hours, there's a whole sermon here that we could talk about.

The heart of ministry. You see, the disciples in the Matthew 18 context are so consumed with self, who's the greatest?

That they've missed their opportunity to serve. They've got to become like this child. They've got to become like these children. No privileges, no rights, just here to serve, not here for self.

Notice this on the screen. Jesus did not ask us to be the greatest. He called us to serve the least. He didn't ask us disciples to be the greatest.

[31 : 30] The point of this was never. Disciples, I need you to be the greatest. Hello, Jesus already is the greatest. We've got the greatest covered. What you're called to do is serve the least.

It's to be like a child, take the heart of ministry, and serve, not be served. Faith family, your ability to embrace that is going to determine whether or not you are, listen, a true disciple or a religious Pharisee.

Pharisees want to be the greatest. True disciples want to serve the least of these. Let's take this heart of ministry to heart, because at the end of the day, heaven does not rejoice when religious people keep the rules.

You 99 are so impressive because you never wandered off. No, no, no. Heaven rejoices when sinners find grace, when that one is found.

And I'll tell you this, I'll keep this short, but I'm tired of the religious game that so many churches play when we forget that it's the broken, it's the hurting, it's the least of these that we have come to serve.

[32 : 48] The heart of humanity, the heart of ministry, thirdly, is this story teaches us the heart of the gospel. The heart of the gospel, here's what I mean. How did that one sheep get rescued?

I know, I know, it got smarter and figured its way back. No, that's not how it goes. It got stronger and fought its way back.

No, that's not how it goes. How did that sheep get brought home? The loving shepherd sought him found him and carried him home.

It's all the work of the shepherd. And that's the gospel. The good news of the gospel is you don't have to find your way home.

The good news of the gospel is that in the free grace of the shepherd, he will bring you home. Notice this on the screen. Religion says, find your way home.

[33 : 53] The gospel says, let Jesus carry you home. It's all of grace. Not our pulling ourselves up out of our mess, figuring our own lives out, and getting back to where we're supposed to be.

It's just letting the shepherd throw you on his back and carry you back home. That's the heart of the gospel. Faith family, you and I are not dogs in need of a better trainer.

We are sheep in need of a loving savior. We are not dogs in need of a better trainer. That's religion. We are sheep in need of a loving savior.

That's the gospel. And then finally, we see not just the heart of humanity, the heart of ministry, the heart of the gospel, but we see the heart of God. We see the heart of God.

Why would Jesus, the great shepherd, search like this? And the answer is very simple. Faith family, look right here. Because God has a personal love for you.

[35 : 06] God has a personal love. Like, let that sink in. The shepherd loves that one sheep. No matter how far it's gone, no matter what it's done, no matter how far from home it may be, the shepherd goes to that length to find that sheep because of the personal love he has for it.

Notice this on the screen. To those of you who feel you are impossibly lost, Jesus says you are infinitely loved.

To those of you that would say, I am impossibly lost. Jesus says you are infinitely loved. That is the heart of God.

In faith family, the reason why I know that's true is because one day there was a son who was left all alone.

he wasn't left alone on an airplane. He was left alone on a cross. And the son was not left there alone because he had behavioral problems.

[36 : 25] He was left there alone because we do. And that son was left there on the cross alone not because the father did not want him, but precisely because the father wants you.

You see, the good news of the gospel is that the good shepherd became the lost sheep. The good shepherd, Jesus Christ, became the lost sheep, by taking our place on the cross.

So that no matter how far you've wandered, you can know this, God will not stop until he finds you. And when he finds you, he promises he'll never send you back.

Let's pray together. together.