

# The Shepherd Seeking His Lost Sheep

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Date: 06 December 2020

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Welcome to our services today. And as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing upon his Word. Let us pray.

Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, grant to us that we would understand in some measure the great privilege that is ours today when we can come around thine own Word in an act of worship.

When we can come into thine own presence through prayer. When we can come with that boldness and confidence through the merits of thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That we can come to seek thy mercy and to seek thy grace to help us in our time of need. Grant to us today, we pray thee, the grace to enable us to humble ourselves and to take that place that belongs to us at thine own foodstool in acknowledging our sinnership.

We give thee thanks for the great provision that thou hast made for us and thy Son to meet with our needs as sinners. For his finished work upon the cross.

[ 1 : 3 0 ] The efficacy of that finished work and the great promise that thou hast given to us that if we confess our sins, that thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

All the efficacy of the finished work of thy Son, being applied to sinners such as we are by faith. And so we give thee thanks, O Lord, for the gospel, for the good news of Jesus Christ.

And we pray that as the gospel has been proclaimed throughout our communities today, that it may go forth in the power and demonstration of thy Spirit, in convicting and converting and in the building of thy own church here on earth.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for all the tokens of thy goodness and kindness that thou doth so abundantly outpour upon us every day in things that are temporal as well as in things that are spiritual.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, that we can have fellowship with each other in the gospel through our Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray, O Lord, that thou would bless all thy servants who have gone forth this day to proclaim thy truth.

[ 3 : 0 3 ] May they do so with boldness and confidence. We pray, O Lord, that thy Spirit would work among us, for it is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profiteth nothing, that the veil may be taken from our hearts, that the hearts of our people may be opened to receive thy word, and that thy word may be lodged in their heart and bring forth evidence in their lives.

For it is the work of thine own hand that shall give thee praise. And so we pray, O Lord, that thou would come in a day of thy power, and that thou would bring our people to see their need, and bring our people to repentance, bring our people to seek the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

We give thee thanks for the gift of thy Son. We give thee thanks, O Lord, for his finished work, that he was the one who died and who was buried and who rose again, that he is the one who ascended to thy right hand.

And we give thee thanks for his continual ministry there, and the intercession that he makes on behalf of those given to him by thee in the covenant of redemption.

And we give thee thanks for the great promise that he will return, not to offer himself again as a sacrifice for sin, but to engather his people, and to bring them to be with himself in the inheritance that he has prepared for them.

[ 4 : 43 ] We give thee thanks that through the gospel that we can have that living hope. As we are in a world where there is so much uncertainty, in a world that is changing every day, we give thee thanks that we have a certain hope, a hope that is steadfast and sure.

And we give thee thanks that our hope is in the unchanging God, the God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The God who cannot lie.

The God who hath given us great and precious promises that has been sealed for us by the blood of the everlasting covenant.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for thy word. We give thee thanks for the preaching of the gospel, for the fellowship of thy people. And we pray today, O Lord, that thou would be with those who mourn the passing of loved ones, those who find an empty place in their hearts, in their homes, in their families.

We pray that thy own comfort may be their portion today. Remember those who are ill, and may thy healing hand be upon them.

[ 6 : 07 ] Bless those who take care of them, who remember the elderly and the lonely. And we pray, O Lord, that thou would draw close to them, that they may know that there is one who will never leave them, nor forsake them.

We pray for our young people and our children. May thou raise up a generation among us that would fear thy name, who would be thine own witnesses in this world.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would continue with us as we come to meditate upon thy word. O lead us into thine own truth.

We are dependent upon thee, for without thee we can do nothing. And we pray, O Lord, that thou would help us as we prepare ourselves to meet together again in the church.

We pray, O Lord, that thy spirit would be among us, and that thy spirit, O Lord, would work powerfully among us as communities. We pray, O Lord, that we would wait upon thee.

[ 7 : 17 ] And all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins is in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Let us now read the word of God as we find it in the Gospel of Luke and chapter 15.

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

[ 8 : 31 ] Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it?

And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the peace which I had lost. Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

And he said, A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.

[ 9 : 49 ] And when he came to himself, he said, How many high servants of my father shall have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Make me as one of thy high servants. And he arose and came to his father, but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry.

For this my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found, and it began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

[ 11 : 19 ] And he was angry, and would not go in. Therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answered, he said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.

And yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I may make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, who shalt devour thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad. For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found.

May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word. And seeking the Lord's blessing, let us now turn to the beginning of the chapter again.

That is, the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15. And we'll read from the beginning. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners were to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

[ 12 : 31 ] And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it.

And when he hath found it, he laith it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over nine and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

What the Bible said about shepherds was familiar to anyone who knew the Old Testament, especially the scribes and the Pharisees who lived in the days of Jesus.

The story of shepherds and sheep have great prominence in the Bible. The conflict that took place between Cain and April was over the fact that April offered from the flock while Cain took his offering from the crops that he grew in the field.

[ 13 : 46 ] Many years after, when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt on the night that they were to be set free, God instituted a meal that was to be very important in the national life of Israel.

This meal was called the Passover, which included taking a one-year-old male lamb without effect, draining its blood and placing the blood on the doorposts of the home, then roasting the meat and eating it with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast.

The inhabitants of those houses marked by the blood were spared from death and lost on the evening when God passed by. The Passover was to create a powerful foretelling of the Lamb of God who would one day die for the sins of the world.

I suppose that the psalm with which we are all most familiar is Psalm 23. Probably it is the most familiar portion of Scripture that we know.

A psalm that is often sung at marriages and funerals. It is a psalm that most of us were all taught from a very young age and probably was the first portion of Scripture committed to memory.

[ 15 : 10 ] In Psalm 23, we are immediately told at the beginning that the writer is David who himself was a shepherd tending to his father's flock. It may have been that while he was sitting down one day watching his father's sheep that he wrote the psalm.

However, David in Psalm 23 confesses that he himself is in need of shepherding and that he has found one that can truly shepherd him.

For he says, the Lord is my shepherd or Jehovah is my shepherd. We find that the theme of God shepherding his people is a theme that runs throughout the Bible.

When Jacob came to bless the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, he used these words, God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lands.

Now, the word that we have there, the word fed, as we have here in the authorised version, in the original Hebrew, it is the very same word that we have in Psalm 23 for shepherd.

[ 16 : 36 ] So that the words could read like this, God before whom my father, Abraham and Isaac, did walk, the God which shepherd me all my life long and to this day.

Again, in Psalm 80, we have God taken before us as a shepherd in these words, give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

And of course, there is that well-known text of Isaiah 40, he shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are with young.

We find in the Bible that many of the prophets like Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Nahum and Sechariah uses shepherd imagery.

Now, given the importance of shepherds and sheep in the Old Testament, it should be no wonder to us that shepherds are included in the account of Jesus' birth and life as we read in Luke chapter 2 where we read and there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over the flock by night.

[ 17 : 57 ] And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. God. When Jesus entered his public ministry, John the Baptist declared him to be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

While the apostle John was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos, he continually mentions the Lamb which is a reference to Christ that he keeps seeing in his visions.

He even mentions the Lamb of Shepherding. In Revelation chapter 7 we read these words, For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them into living fountains of water.

And throughout his teaching Jesus refers to shepherds and sheep regularly in ways that people understand. He refers to himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

[ 19 : 19 ] The New Testament describes it as the threefold shepherd ministry of Jesus. In the Gospel of John chapter 10 verse 11 Jesus calls himself just as we have just noted here the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep.

In Hebrews 13 verse 20 Christ is entitled the great shepherd of the sheep through being brought back again from the dead.

In 1 Peter chapter 5 the Lord is designated as the chief shepherd with reference to his second coming when he shall give to his own people a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Thus Jesus is the good shepherd he is the great shepherd he is the chief shepherd. shepherd. And what we have before us today is a very popular parable which I am sure you would have heard been preached upon many many times.

It is a three part parable. You may ask what is a parable? Well a parable is a story which illustrates one or more instructive lessons or principles.

[ 20 : 38 ] And in this three part parable we have first a shepherd who goes out and finds a lost sheep and brings it home rejoicing. In the second part we have the story of a woman who lost but found her missing coin.

And in the third part of the story we have what is commonly called the prodigal son who after a life away from the father's house returns soon and the father runs out to embrace him and bring him back home to the disgust of the elder brother.

It is really a three in one parable. All three parts have the same theme. Something is lost something is found and there is rejoicing.

Today we are going to look at the first part of the parable. Jesus spoke this parable because the scribes and Pharisees were deeply offended by the fact that Jesus associated himself with those whom they regarded as sinners.

That is those who did not keep the law and in the way that they did. In other words they looked upon them as religious outsiders.

[ 22 : 01 ] Luke here records for us and threw near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him and the Pharisees and scribes murmured saying this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

Now in those days publicans were not people who sold alcohol. A publican in biblical times were tax collectors. believers. They were working for the Roman authorities and one that we may be familiar with is found in this very gospel in chapter 18.

His name is Zacchaeus. He was the chief publican, the chief tax collector for the city of Jericho. The Roman authorities gave us some that they expected to be collected from each district but the publicans very often overtaxed the people and as long as the Roman authorities received the amount that they had asked for they closed their eyes to the rest and the publicans very often pocketed the rest of the money for themselves and they became very rich.

But because they worked for the Romans and for their crookedness they were despised and looked down upon by the people.

They were looked upon as traitors who were willing to sell their own nation. Now sinners were regarded by the scribes and Pharisees as those who not only led notorious lifestyles but who refused to conform to their rules.

[ 23 : 42 ] But the thing that we find is that Jesus always seemed to attract religious outsiders and that is one of the reasons that the religious elite like the scribes and Pharisees found fault with him and they complained about his ministry.

Now although the scribes and Pharisees thought that they were better than the publicans and sinners and possibly outwardly they were but the plague of the heart was the same.

They all had one basic need like me and you and that need could only be meant by Jesus for the Bible makes it clear to us and tells us that if we are without Jesus that we are spiritually lost.

So Jesus spoke this parable to them identifying himself as the shepherd who has come to seek and to save the lost sheep.

Now the shepherd began his mission or his search or his pursuit when he discovered that one of his sheep was missing. What man of you having an hundred sheep if he lose one of them doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it?

[ 25 : 04 ] a man with a hundred sheep is really well off. Losing one out of a hundred is not a great loss but this shepherd does what any good shepherd would do.

He goes out to seek and find the lost sheep. Jesus of course was speaking about himself as the shepherd as the good shepherd.

And we can see here the special intimate relationship that exists between the shepherd and the sheep. And that is true in a natural sense in the relationship between a shepherd and his flock.

but how much more in the spiritual sense between Jesus as the shepherd of his flock. And you may ask well why are the sheep so precious to Jesus?

Well they are precious to him because they are the father's gift to him. For he says thine the were and thou gavest them unto me. They belong to the shepherd as the father's gift and he is always mine thankful of that very fact.

[ 26 : 20 ] Remember he prayed at one time Father I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am. The Bible says that the sheep that they are elected are chosen in him and the beloved that is in Christ.

At the very heart of the electing love of God to the lost sheep was his beloved son. At the very heart of giving them to his son was his love to the son.

The father is expressing his love to the son so he gave them a flock. A flock which no man can number. And he gave them that flock to his son in order to shepherd them and to bring them home.

God we can say that this mission of his lost sheep in a sense began with Jesus in eternity. Within the Godhead the triune God there was an agreement made.

A plan was set forth of salvation for the lost sheep could be achieved. That arrangement or plan we call the covenant of redemption.

- [ 27 : 33 ] A covenant made between the three persons of the Godhead the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit to effect our salvation. That would bring the lost sheep to come under a special purpose and he would receive the benefits of his covenant of grace.

That covenant of grace that he had towards his people. And the shepherd took the initiative to go and seek the sheep that was lost.

The initiative to bring sinners to salvation began with God himself. And in that covenant the Son took that initiative to come and to seek and save the sheep that was lost.

Although the history of this world it all began when he came into the garden of Eden after Adam had fallen in sin and he said where art thou? that is the voice of the shepherd seeking his lost sheep.

I believe that Adam was the first sheep that he found and brought within the fold of faith. However, let us note that the story brings out this personal element.

- [ 28 : 52 ] One sheep is lost among the hundred. And if you are outside the fold of faith today, don't look and count how many other sheep are outside or even how many are inside.

Remember that the purpose of salvation is always personal. One sheep is lost among the hundred. Where do you stand?

Are you saved and within or are you lost and outside the fold of faith? How do you stand in relationship to the fold of faith?

Are you within the fold or are you outside the fold of faith? The sheep is in a very dangerous situation.

The sheep is astray and lost. Remember that familiar chapter in Isaiah which says we all like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way.

- [ 29 : 59 ] To go astray is to wander, to depart, to move away from something. This indeed speaks of our original sin in Adam who as our covenant head or representative failed to keep the commandment of God and sinned against God.

We fell with him in his first sin and we partook of his guilt therefore we are constituted as sinners but there is also what we call actual sins.

Our actual sins flow out of our original sin and that leaves us guilty before God. It leaves us liable to punishment. It leaves us exposed to God's judgment.

what a picture Jesus draws here of the lost sinner. Sheep we are told can easily become disoriented and when they leave the fold they cannot find their way back to the fold.

They stray and they are so defenseless against almost any danger and they can be so easily torn apart by wild animals.

- [ 31 : 08 ] And the Bible says that we are spiritually like this lost sheep. We are lost in the rocky wilderness wandering aimlessly and to our terror.

Satan is like a roaring lion, like a wild beast ready and waiting to devour us. And unless we are rescued, our end will be destruction.

We know that sometimes along our own moors hear that sheep wander and often they see some grass down on a rocky ledge and they make their way down there and enjoy the lost grass for a while but then it withers away and so often they cannot make their way back from the ledge and they are lost unless they are rescued.

Well that is the way we are. People see the pleasures of this world so exciting. We must remember that the Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin and what do people do is that they indulge themselves unto them only to find that the pleasures only brings temporal satisfaction.

They grow tired of them and so often they find themselves then entrapped in sin and they are lost unless they are rescued and the thing is we cannot find our way back to God on our own.

[ 32 : 35 ] We need Jesus to come and to save us. Jesus said I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.

Like the shepherd in the story, Jesus goes after his sheep. For this was his great mission.

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. And the eastern shepherd looking for a lost sheep would have to take a journey.

He would have to travel the wild terrain and he would have to climb steep hills and go down rocky places and meet with every danger but he would not stop searching until he found the sheep that was lost.

And although the eastern shepherd is worthy of our admiration nevertheless what Jesus has done for us is even far more remarkable. And for him it also involved a journey.

[ 33 : 44 ] A journey from the bosom of the Father to the cross of Golgotha. In Jesus we see extraordinary condescension.

Jesus the eternal Son of God, the very God of the very God, took to himself a true human nature and he surrendered to his divine rights, veiled his personal glory and lived his life on earth as a man in total dependence on the Father and the Holy Spirit.

And then he died like a slave or a common criminal in torment on a cross. Isaiah 53 again brings to us the nature of Christ's death and what it meant for him to be the shepherd that came to rescue his own sheep.

In these words, surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem him stinging, smitten of God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.

[ 34 : 59 ] We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. However, there is a sense in which the shepherd's quest and mission does not end at the cross of Golgotha.

For we read in this story, the shepherd go after that which is lost until he find it. The shepherd will fulfil God's ancient promise of Ezekiel chapter 34 verse 11.

Behold I, even I, will both such my sheep and seek them out. And how does he such and seek them out? Well, he calls them by name and they know his voice.

Again, this brings before us the personal relationship that exists between the shepherd and the sheep. As we already said, salvation is a personal experience.

The reason a person can be a Christian today is because Jesus, the good shepherd, called them by name. In theological terms, we call this effectual calling.

[ 36 : 16 ] The Shorter Catechism defines effectual calling as the work of God's spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills that are persuaded and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.

There is this personal interaction between the shepherd and his flock. Jesus knows the name of each sheep that was given to him as a gift from the Father, and he effectually calls them.

Have you heard the shepherd's voice? This good shepherd loves his sheep. He purchased their salvation with his own blood on the cross.



He frees them from what their sins deserved, and now he calls them through the gospel. Have you heard the voice of the shepherd calling you in the gospel?

Let's for a moment think of the sheep that is lost. It is in a hopeless and helpless condition. The sheep having been convinced of their personal sin and misery, convicted of their personal sin and misery, hears a voice which at first may be very faint, but the sheep pricks up her ears and recognises if there is to be any hope of being rescued, then there must be a response to this voice.

[ 37 : 53 ] The sheep may wait, but the voice gets louder and draws closer and closer. This we can call the enlightening our minds and the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills.

And eventually the sheep responds and the sheep cries out. The sheep responds to the shepherd's voice by crying out in faith. What about yourself today?

Are you aware of your lostness? Have you heard the shepherd's voice? But more importantly, have you responded to his voice in the gospel by the cry of faith?

It is not enough to hear the shepherd's voice. To be rescued, the sheep must respond. And like a good shepherd, Jesus comes to where you are.

When you cry, he comes to you, he comes to where you are. The psalmist could say, he brought me up out, also out of a horrible pit, out of a mighty clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and he hath put a new song in my mouth even praise unto our God.

[ 39 : 10 ] Oh, you may be in the gutter of life, but he will come to the gutter for you. He will come to where you are in order to rescue you.

The shepherd goes after that which is lost until he finds it. What hope this gives to anyone who is lost in the wilderness of sin?

The shepherd is calling you and it is your responsibility to respond. The psalmist said, Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice, let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

If thou Lord, shalt mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared. However far we may have gone astray, whatever scars we may bear as a result of our rebellion, wounded by this fallen world, your fleece may have been torn by the thorns of this world, but the shepherd is willing and ready to forgive and to heal up all our sores and all our wounds.

You may say as a psalmist in Psalm 38 my wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness but listen in Psalm 147 he says there he healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds.

[ 40 : 44 ] That's what the shepherd does and surely this gives hope to the sinner who's lost. The sheep in our story was once found in the sheep fold and had all the privileges have been found there.

Am I speaking to someone who once knew all the gospel privileges whose place was to be in gospel meetings under the preaching of the word who looked as promising but then like the sheep who wanders away slowly at first from the fold you have wandered away and those privileges that you once enjoyed are now a distant memory yes your wandering away was very subtle your attendance in church began to wane instead of twice in the church it became once on the Lord's day but yet you stayed for a while under the sound of the gospel but then your bible reading became sparse your prayer life became thin and soon you had distanced yourself from the fold and you went your own way perhaps at first it sounded and looked very promising as the proverb goes the grass is greener on the other side but today you are experienced that all that glitter is not gold but my friend there is hope for you the shepherd calls and your responsibility is to respond repent and cry out in faith for the shepherd has promised and him that cometh to me

I will in no wise cast out or perhaps I am speaking to someone who not only enjoyed gospel privileges but made a profession of belonging to the shepherd but who also wandered away from the shepherd and the other sheep that belonged to the fold once you enjoyed the fellowship of the fold but now it is all a distant memory and you're wandering away may have been just as subtle slowly but truly moving away from your attendance on the ministry of the word your scripture reading your prayer and the companionship and fellowship of the flock and the sad thing is that we may work up many arguments in defence of our doings if we are looking for excuses we shall find them however my friend for you there is hope for the shepherd is today calling you and he says to you today return ye backsliding children and I will heal your backslidings the shepherd's great promise to backsliding

Israel found in the prophecy of Osea I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely for mine anger is turned away from him I will be as a Jew unto Israel he shall grow as a lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon oh my friend cry out today towards the shepherd as he calls you take with your words and turn to the Lord and say unto him take away all iniquity and receive us graciously repent and cry out in faith for the shepherd will abundantly pardon God gave this message to Israel through his prophet Ezekiel and the same message is true for me and you today in Ezekiel chapter 34 we read behold I even I will pour such my sheep and seek them out as a shepherd seek out his flock on the day that he is among the sheep that are scattered so will

I seek out my sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day and I will bring them out from the people and gather them from the countries and will bring them to their own land and feed them upon the mountains I will feed them in good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel shall the fold be there shall they lie in a good fold and a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel I will feed my flock and I will cause them to lie down saith the Lord God 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 what a gracious promise and what a gracious call the shepherd is extending to you today oh have you heard his call how do you respond to his call come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and

[ 45 : 55 ] I will give you rest oh what man of you having a hundred sheep if he lose one of them do not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it may the Lord bless to us our meditation upon his word let us pray we give thee thanks O Lord that thou art the good shepherd we give thee thanks that thou art the one that came to seek sinners such as we are we give thee thanks that we can have this living hope in thy word and that we can have this living hope in our life if we have responded to the call to the shepherd that all the promises of his word belongs to us that he will never leave us nor forsake us and wherever we find ourselves today we give thee thanks that thy word proclaims to us that thou art a gracious shepherd and that thou will forgive us to the uttermost that thou will forgive us all our sins that thou will forgive us all our shortcomings oh may we be unable to say like thy flock fold the

Lord is my shepherd we ask oh Lord that thou would continue with us during the day and all that we ask with the forgiveness of our sins in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen