

The Lost Sheep

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[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Just about two years into our church's life, Covenant Fellowship just mailed us a check for either three or five grand, just out of the blue, just because they love church planting.

And I wrote there, Senior Pastor Abel, to thank Jim in person yesterday. So he served on that church, on that pastoral team for a number of years, and he's an evangelist. Not in the sense that you pop up a tent and invite everybody around to come, though Jim would do fine in that setting.

He's an evangelist biblically in the sense that he's devoted his life to equipping people for evangelism. That's what he's going to help us do this morning, by preaching God's Word and by helping us have Christ's heart for the lost.

I'm pumped and so thankful. Thanks for coming. Thanks for hanging out. Thanks for investing your time in our little church. We're very grateful. So come on.

[1 : 27] Well, thank you guys for having me. This is the nicest church building I've ever seen in my life. I feel uncomfortable right now preaching in venues.

I feel underdressed. It's okay. It's amazing. And I just want to just take a moment just to really thank Walt.

Your senior pastor is an amazing pastor. He loves you so deeply. And it's been such a joy to spend time with him and to see his heart for you all.

And Taylor as well. I've gotten to know Taylor during the Pastors College. And just these men and their heart for you, their love for you. So what a joy. It's just influenced and helped me.

So I'm very grateful to be here. If you wouldn't mind turning to Luke chapter 15. We're going to be talking about the parable of the lost sheep.

[2 : 27] And let me read from Luke 15 in verse 1. This is Luke 15 verse 1.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. Drawing near to hear Jesus.

And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them. So he told them this parable. What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he's lost one of them, does not leave the 99 in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I found my sheep that was lost.

Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.

[3 : 46] I want to read an article to you. Law enforcement officers will tell you that they are ready to respond to any life-threatening situation.

In any crime or any emergency where a person's life is on the line. But what do you do when a toddler is stuck in an 8-inch wide well shaft?

None of my kids could have ever fit in an 8-inch wide well shaft at any point in their lives. They were very fat children. 8 inches is like this wide. So I don't know how this happened. What do you do when a toddler is stuck in an 8-inch wide well shaft?

She's too deep to reach with your hands and is too young to communicate with. This is the situation that Midland police encountered in October of 1987 when 18-month-old Jessica McClure fell down and abandoned water well and was lodged there for three days.

Does anybody remember this story? Oh my goodness, good, yeah. So I was in high school at this point. Police Sergeant Andy Glasscock says, nobody could understand the magnitude of it. You couldn't even begin to comprehend.

[4 : 54] There was a backyard with a little metal pipe sticking out of it. Nobody could fathom that someone could fall down that. It wasn't until you could hear her crying that you realized someone was down there.

And at that point, the few officers, so police officers began to come and they began this desperate attempt to free the child by digging with shovels and anything in their sight.

Other firefighters and other units were called to the scene. What had happened was Jessica had fallen down this well. It's 8 inches wide. 22 feet, okay? So she fell down 22 feet.

At the point where it was 22 feet, it opened up from 8 inches to like 15 inches. So it kind of opened up, but there was debris there and there was a drop below her of 67 feet straight down.

The other reason that she stopped was not just the debris there, but because her leg was up over her head. So her one leg was over her head and she was wedged in there for three days.

[6 : 00] They were making virtually no progress. And so they sought the nation's best mining engineer to direct this.

There's a man named David Lilly. He was a veteran engineer with the U.S. Department of Labor Mine Safety. He had years of experience rescuing trap miners. So they flew him in immediately from New Mexico.

And then it says, meanwhile, everybody started to put their heads together as to what to do. There was a backhoe there. Someone tried to dig a hole. It didn't work. The earth was too hard. Then they decided to drill a hole next to the well and then dig across to it.

They thought it would be accomplished in an hour, but instead it went on. More rescue teams and spectators and news media showed up. Sergeant Glasscock said, the hardest part was you could hear her crying.

It was more like a scared whimpers, like she wasn't sure what was going on. He said, I have children and there was no way once you heard her voice that you could leave her there until the end of it.

[7 : 00] As I listened to Jessica cry, I thought about my children and my wife. I raised four kids of my own, adopted one more. I'm a children type person. I couldn't listen to that for too long without getting tears in my eyes.

And then finally, David Lilly, the nation's best mining engineer, arrived, but the rescuers met several obstacles, the biggest being impenetrable rock that would take almost two days to cut through.

They were making horrendously slow progress, about two inches per hour. And finally, David Lilly said, what we need is a super high pressure water blasting drill.

The problem is it was all the way across the state. They called the U.S. government to try to get a C4 and get it on there. There was all kind of paperwork. That's another story. They called FedEx.

FedEx says, we're on this. Grab this drill and brought it over. Then the drilling began very successfully. And finally, after three days of digging down, they began to dig across by hand, which was tedious work.

[8 : 03] But they kept bringing guys down to dig as hard as they could. And finally, it says, the rescuers had their first glimpse of baby Jessica. One of the rescue workers reached up and touched her toe.

But the first rescue attempt didn't go through. They couldn't get her out. They had trouble getting down into the open shaft. They had to come back up and reevaluate and regroup. Then they basically sent them back down to get her out one way or another, even if they had to break her leg because she wasn't able to stay there much longer.

The second time the rescuers went back down, everything was real tense. And then up from the shaft came one of the rescue workers holding baby Jessica in his arms.

I fell on my knees and started crying, Glasscock said. He said everyone was crying and hugging and honking horns. There were tears of gladness and joy on every face.

Baby Jessica had been saved. This was one of the greatest rescues of all time. And it is a great example of perseverance and sacrifice and compassion.

[9 : 23] And that's exactly what this parable is all about. We see the extraordinary heart of God to rescue lost men and women.

And we weren't like baby Jessica who was innocent and helpless, but sinners rebelling against God.

And yet God came after us and rescued us. And what a contrast this is to the Pharisees, to the religious leaders of the day.

Look at what it says in verse one. It says, Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

I love this. I love this. Now sinners, when Luke uses the word sinners here, it means people that aren't even trying to follow the law. So they're not even pretending anymore.

[10 : 26] They are just sinning out the house. And tax collectors were the most despised and hated and rejected people in Israel.

These are the people that are the farthest from God. These are the people that are the most messed up, the worst sinners, and yet they are being drawn to the one who's closest to God.

Those who are farthest from God are coming near to the one who is closest to God. Those who are least holy are drawing near to the one who is most holy.

Now how is this happening? Usually, if we know someone is holy, it makes us feel uncomfortable. It might drive us away. It makes us aware of our sin. How is this happening with the worst sinners in society?

Well, I'll tell you. It is the profound love, the towering love of Christ. This towering love, this overflowing love that pours out of the Savior like light pours out of the Son.

[11 : 47] Now, aren't you glad? Think about this. Aren't you glad that sinners can draw near to the Savior?

Aren't you grateful for that this morning? That you were able to come near? That he said, no, don't stay away. You can't come near. You're too far gone. No, no, no. Come near.

Come near to me. See, what is so amazing about this is that we have trouble loving sinners. It's hard for us when someone is sinning against us or rebelling or has betrayed us or it's hard for us.

It's not hard for Jesus to love sinners. This is his heart. This is what he does so well.

Sinners drew near to him as love poured out of him. Now, something very different is pouring out of the Pharisees. Look at verse 2.

[12 : 54] It says, And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them. So these guys are grumbling and judging and despising and rejecting these sinners.

This is preposterous to them. Jesus is not only showing compassion to these outcasts, he's actually receiving them and befriending them and welcoming them as if they too could be a part of God's family, as if they could be included in God's kingdom.

This is not the God they serve. This is not the God they serve. So Jesus tells them this parable and he often spoke to the Pharisees in parables to show them this is God's heart.

This is, this is who God is. God isn't like you. I'm going to show you what God is like. And then it says in verse 3, so he told them this parable.

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.

[14 : 11] It's kind of like saying what kind of a man, what kind of a man would just let a lost sheep die? What kind of a shepherd?

Because this is not so obvious to us, right? I mean, we're not shepherds. I'm assuming there's no shepherds here. And it's not obvious to us because it seems like we're still in pretty good shape. I mean, we still have ninety-nine.

Maybe we should just be thankful for the sheep that we have. Maybe the little guy will find his way back somehow. Maybe we should just be content with what we have. It doesn't seem like that big of a deal to us.

It would have been a huge deal to the shepherd. It's like saying what kind of a man would turn away from something in great danger?

Or in keeping with our illustration, what kind of a man could just stand there and let baby Jessica die? What kind of a man could just stand there and not do something?

[15 : 16] What kind of a man would not make every possible effort to rescue her? Who could hear her cries and just ignore them? Who would be guilty of such neglect?

What kind of a man would not make who I think I am? I know I am. I am guilty of this omission when I don't pursue the lost.

When I just let them go. When I do little to reach out. When I just stay focused on my own life. When I exert little effort and take minimal risk to rescue them.

Now, some of you do an amazing job when it comes to reaching those who don't know the Lord. You have a heart that longs for people to come to know the Savior and you're a great example to those around you.

But many of us struggle when it comes to evangelism. And even those who do well sometimes lose vision and motivation. Why is that? How can we worship with such great joy on Sunday?

[16 : 28] You know, I think about this all the time. You know, we worship with great joy. Our hands are raised. We're praising the Lord. And then when we go out those doors, we put our hands in our pockets and we zip our mouth shut and we don't talk about it.

How is that possible? For something that we love so much. How can, how can, well, let me ask it this way. Why is evangelism so difficult for us but so easy for Jesus?

Why is it such a struggle for us but natural for Christ? Why is reaching the lost at the center of his life and ministry and so often on the side for us?

We'll have three reasons. Why is evangelism easy for Jesus? Three reasons. Number one, the Savior sees the danger. The Savior sees the danger.

The shepherd who represents Christ clearly sees the danger which is why in verse four he goes after that lost sheep without a second thought. A lost sheep was a dead sheep.

[17 : 28] They were easy prey for lions, bears, and wolves and if a predator didn't get the lamb it would quickly starve or dehydrate. A sheep has no way of rescuing itself.

It is pitifully helpless, its instincts are useless and its defenses are pathetic. And you know what? It's the same for non-Christians.

They are in great, great danger and they have no way of saving themselves. They have no way of saving themselves.

They are doomed apart from Christ. Let me read you part of a testimony. This is from a woman named Stacia Peterson.

She says, I was raised in a very strict traditional Catholic family in Ohio. I was very involved in all types of sports from grade school through college. I was successful enough at sports to become a college All-American and was introduced into the Sports Hall of Fame in Ohio for basketball and track and field.

[18 : 38] I know she's good. I played with her. As an adult, she says, I went to church every Sunday because I thought that's what we were supposed to do for God to love us and to get to heaven. However, I never felt God's love.

On the outside, things looked great but inside me was a void. In trying to fill the void, I made a lot of wrong decisions and lived a very self-destructive lifestyle. After many years of being in a mentally and physically abusive relationship, I was left by myself very alone and not wanting to continue on with life.

How could God love me with all the mistakes I made? I'm not an All-American. I'm a loser. After several attempts to end my life, I decided upon the day that I would really end it because I just could not take it anymore.

Now, if you would have met Stacia, you would have seen a successful person. She was an All-American but she was in great danger.

Apart from Christ, men and women are pitifully helpless and they are utterly lost. But we often don't see the danger when it comes to the lost.

[19 : 51] Now, with someone like baby Jessica, the danger is crystal clear. It's real. It's right in front of us. We can see it and hear it and touch it. But the danger that awaits the lost is far worse than what Jessica faced or anything that we can imagine.

in Matthew 13, in verse 41, Jesus says, the Son of Man will send His angels and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace.

In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Luke 16, Jesus said, the time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side.

The rich man also died and was buried in hell where he was in torment. He looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.

So He called him, Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue because I am in agony in this fire.

[21 : 18] Revelation 20, 15 says, if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Amen. Amen. This is not easy to talk about. It's uncomfortable.

I wish we didn't have to talk about people going to hell but if we love Jesus and if we love lost people the way that He did, we won't be afraid to look hell in the eyes.

Eternal punishment is a necessary result of God's holy justice. Hell is real. It's real and it's worse than anything we can imagine but many of us have trouble seeing it or we choose not to see it.

We can prefer to think happier thoughts, to think lighter thoughts. I know in my life it's easier to think about temporary things. It's easier to focus on this life and the flesh prefers it that way and bends us inward and downward toward ourselves and the earth so we just wave to our neighbors, we interact politely with a co-worker, we chat kindly with unsaved relatives and rarely think about the eternal danger that awaits them.

[22 : 46] They don't seem like a lost sheep or a helpless child stuck in a pipe but they are. they are. They are. They are actually far worse.

See when we see danger it moves us. It compels us to action to take initiative. I will give you an illustration. My wife and I before we had kids used to go down the shore.

This is how we would say it for Philly we go down the shore. So we are going down the shore and we went to my great great aunt had this little place on the bay like the back bay so not the ocean but there was a dock and the houses were all these little houses jammed together with these docks.

We would fish and crab right off the docks. It was beautiful. We loved being here and one time we were there just hanging out. We were sitting on the dock and again all these houses are there all these old wooden houses and I looked over and three houses down there was a fire on this other guy's dock and it was about six feet tall and you have to understand if this goes like that the whole these are old it's gone.

I jumped up I moved faster than I ever moved in my life. If I could have sustained the speed I think I could have made the NFL. I didn't know I could move this quick. I jumped up ran over I had jumped the little fences between the yards jumped into one house this woman ran out I said turn your hose on I grabbed her hose threw it over to the next fence jumped over and I put the fire out.

[24 : 25] Now no one had to convince me that it might be a good idea to do something about this fire. Right? Nobody came up and said let me hand you a brochure.

Here's a house here's fire here's ashes oh if that does that then that turns in no one that none of that had to I did not even think I just sprang into action.

Why? Because when we see danger it moves us. It compels us. Why is evangelism often difficult for us?

What makes us miss something so important? Well I think one of the reasons is that we don't see the danger. But Jesus does. the Savior sees the danger.

In this story the shepherd sees the danger and he just goes. It compels him to act. He goes immediately after the lost sheep. He takes action and initiative pouring his energy into finding that sheep constantly calling and seeking that sheep.

[25 : 36] This is the heart of God. To go to rescue men and women. The Father saw the danger that we were in. He saw that we were lost and he took action.

He sent his Son and willingly crushed Jesus on the cross in our place. The Father exhausted his full wrath on the Savior to save us.

This is the heart of God. And it's the heart that he calls us to have. God knows that we all desire to reach the lost.

We all desire this because the Spirit of God lives in us. And God is going to help us. He loves to help us. He loves to make us more like Christ.

God is going to help us to see what he sees for our good and for his glory. So that's number one, the Savior sees the danger. Why is evangelism easy for Jesus?

[26 : 40] Number one, Savior sees the danger. Number two, the Savior sees the value. The Savior sees the value. So in verse four, the shepherd not only goes after the lost sheep, I don't know if you noticed this though, he also leaves the 99 in order to do so.

So the lost sheep receive special attention over those who are safe and sound. Each sheep was of incredible value to the shepherd, even the wayward, disobedient ones.

That's why he goes after the one. A shepherd would give his entire life to care for the sheep. People, even unbelieving, messed up people, have great value to Jesus.

That's why he saved us. The Savior has immense compassion and love for the lost despite their plight. And this is amazing given what the lost are like.

I was thinking about this recently when I was lost. I was an enemy of God. I was so full of selfishness and pride and judgment and hating others and hating God.

[27 : 57] I rejected God. I betrayed him. I was defiant and ungrateful and insubordinate. And despite these things, God chose to value me.

He chose to value us to make us his own children. This says much more about God than it does about us. He doesn't value us because we deserve it.

He values us because of who he is. Because of his great unchanging towering love for us.

He cares about eternal souls made in the image of God. Now, the Pharisees didn't care. The Pharisees did not value people the way the Savior did.

They didn't see that God wants to, follow me on this, increase the community of God. They didn't see that people were missing from the community and should be brought in.

[29 : 05] They were trying to keep these kind of people out of the community. They wanted the people of God to be more of a small elite club. They were very content with their community.

Listen, are you content? Are we content with our community? With the size of our community? Are we like the Pharisees in this?

Now, many of you are doing a great job. You are regularly inviting people into your lives, inviting people into the church. Thank you for showing us God's heart. But I think I can be a Pharisee when it comes to this because I can, I like my community.

I like my Christian friends. I don't always see a need to bring outsiders into that community and I can view non-Christians as messy and not worth it.

I would rather spend time with my Christian friends. And when I do this, I fail to value and love people the way Christ does.

[30 : 17] listen, Trinity Grace, you're not done. There are people out there that are supposed to be in here.

There are people in the community that God wants you to bring into this community. This is why you're moving to the YMCA because we're running out of seats and we need to fill these seats.

Our community should never stay the same. we should always be seeking to bring people in. See, when we see value in something, it moves us to sacrifice and persevere.

Like with baby Jessica, one of the things that's amazing about the story is the number of people that were doing everything in their power to save this little girl all over our country and our world.

Why? because we value 18-month-old little girls. See, why is evangelism so difficult for us?

[31 : 24] Because we must not see the value in men and women that are lost. But Jesus does. The Savior sees the value.

In this story, the shepherd values the sheep so much. It says, he won't stop until it is found. Verse 4 says he goes after the sheep until he finds it. Verse 5 says when he finds it.

How does he know that he's going to find it? I mean, it could take days. He might have to scramble up cliffs and comb through valleys calling and searching, calling. It might take days to do this.

He might have to exert great amounts of energy. Is it really worth all of that? Absolutely. Because the sheep were of great value.

And the reason that he knows he'll find it is because he's going to persevere until he does. Even if it means he finds the sheep's tattered remains. He is determined. Regardless of the danger, regardless of the sacrifice or the enemies or the risk, he will find that sheep.

[32 : 29] That sheep is in a desperate situation and he must rescue it. He can't just let it go. That's the heart of the Savior.

This is the kind of persevering and sacrificial love Jesus has for the lost. Jesus saw value in people that were lost. That's why he took on flesh and blood.

That's why he came down and he ate with tax collectors and sinners. That's why he hung on that cross and gave his life. This is the heart of Christ.

And it's the heart he calls us to have. And it's the heart that God is going to help us have. How many people here know that God is patient with you?

Is anybody aware of this fact? God is a patient God. He is patient. And it's not like our patience. Sometimes our patience is like, okay, I'll be patient.

[33 : 26] I'm trying, you know, gritting our teeth through this. No, he loves to be patient with us as we slowly conform to his image. And, well, let me just say this.

Maybe you haven't done much in the way of reaching out to the lost. God is going to help you and he's going to be patient with you. Let me finish this story about Stacia.

So she says, so I got in my car with the intent on driving it into a large tree beside the road near my house. As I increase my speed, and approach the curve where the tree was, an incredibly huge deer with huge antlers stopped in the road causing me to screech to a halt.

This may seem odd to you that I was going to kill myself but wouldn't kill a deer. But God, but God knew. This probably doesn't take place in Tennessee. This is more of a northeast thing here happening. I didn't think about that when I shared this.

But God knew. This is what she says. But God knew. Even though I didn't love him and hated myself, I loved animals. So God used the one thing that I really loved, an animal, to stop me.

[34 : 35] I cried all the way home. Upon returning home, I wandered to the empty field. This is crazy. Listen to this. I wandered to the empty field next to my house and just looked up to the sky and cried out, God, please just send someone so I can know how to follow you.

Now this field was vacant for over 35 years. But within a few weeks, a sold sign went up and a house started to be built.

It turns out that the couple who built the house was part of Covenant Fellowship Church, a couple named Mark and Amy. After a few conversations with them about God, they kept mentioning the word grace.

I really did not know what this word meant. Think about that for a second. I didn't know what that meant. Think about how important and how dear grace is to us.

The concept of God's grace, His forgiveness, His undeserved love. And think about that. This is why we name our churches grace. This is why all of our girls have a middle name of grace.

[35 : 40] Like this is, this is so precious to us. And she's saying, what is grace? What does that mean? There are people all around you that are saying, I don't, I don't know what that even means.

So she says, I didn't know what that word meant. Well, one day as I see them pulling out of their driveway, I ran up to them and I asked, what is grace? They turned off their engine, got out of the car and we went on their front porch and they started to explain grace.

And at that time they spoke of a course at their church called the bridge course. And then fast forward, she came to this bridge course, which is an introduction of Christianity, came away on the retreat with us, so we have a retreat.

And she actually didn't make it for all of it. She missed the first night. She came the next morning and she came right in on our prayer time. And she says, a woman came over to me and asked if she could pray for me.

I only remember just falling hard to my knees and deep sobbing and not being able to get far enough under the ground as I truly became aware of my sin in light of God's holiness. I knew my only hope was mercy and I pleaded with God to forgive me.

[36 : 48] By His grace, I was able to give my life to Christ and trust His forgiveness for my sin. At that moment, I saw in my heart Christ. I saw His hands and the blood and the piercing and I realized He did this for me and I was truly loved and forgiven for all my sins.

I saw the chains fall away from my heart. At that moment, my life was changed. I love that story and I love that God dropped Mark and Amy right next door to Stacia.

They did not know that Stacia had almost committed suicide. They just reached out to her with the grace of the gospel. They valued her. They loved her the way Christ does.

Do you realize that God has dropped you right where you are? In your neighborhood, in your workplace, in your school.

He has put you in the exact place where you are so that you can reach out to those around you. God wants to connect us with people who need the gospel.

[38 : 06] And God wants to reward even small steps with great fruit. We simply need to value the people around us enough to build friendships and to share the hope of Christ.

Last point, number three, why is evangelism easy for Jesus? Number three, the Savior sees the joy. I love this. There's a lot of joy in this passage. Verse five, and when he has found it, so when the shepherds found it, he lays this sheep on his shoulders rejoicing.

And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors saying to them, rejoice with me for I found my sheep that was lost. Just so I tell you, there'll be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.

So a lost sheep that is found is cause for great joy. It is cause for a celebration, a party. This shepherd is experiencing some serious joy, and he's sharing his great joy with others.

He's thrilled. I mean, imagine after days of searching, the shepherd finally spies that lost sheep alive. He races to it and hugs it and checks it over, removes some thorns, and then this, he joyfully places it on his shoulder.

[39 : 23] This is amazing because it shows us the heart of God. This is what God did when he rescued us. He rejoiced greatly. And this is hard to understand because our instincts are to do the opposite.

Let me give you an illustration. When I was younger, my brother and I have an identical twin brother. We were probably like five or six or something. My mom told us not to like play in the store. We were in a Kmart. Do you guys have Kmart?

Okay, so there's this Kmart, right? And there were these clothes racks, the kind of these round clothes racks, and we would hide under them. We'd just play hide and seek, and you could hide in there. And so I was hiding from my brother, and he was trying to find me.

My mother told us not to do this. And so there was a lot of disobedience in my home, but that's another story. So I'm hiding under here, right? And I'm there for like a long time. It's like 10 or 15 minutes.

I'm like, yeah, he's not finding me in here. And then I hear on like the intercom, there's a lost child in Kmart, lost child. And I remember thinking like, oh, it's a shame there's somebody that's lost in Kmart, and I hope they find that kid.

[40 : 22] And so after like another couple minutes, I thought, well, maybe I should come out from, you know, my mom's probably looking for me, maybe I should come out from. So I come out of there, and there's this long aisle like in Kmart, and I see my mom in the distance, and she has like the K security with her, you know, like a little K patch or whatever.

And these, and my mom, and she's walking very rapidly toward me. And I'm thinking, she's going to probably be really excited to see me. She's going to be overjoyed to see me.

I think what she said was something like this. Oh, thank God. Where were you? I told you that. You said it with your brother. Your brother's a brother. She put my elbow in my ear, levitated me off the ground, and carried me out of the Kmart at that point.

She actually seemed angry to find me. Like it provoked anger. There was no joy in this.

And listen, this is, I just wish I could communicate this. Everything in that shepherd should have been angry at that sheep. That sheep was disobedient, betrayed the shepherd, disobeyed him, left him.

[41 : 41] If I was that shepherd, I'm like, did you ever hear like where they break the sheep's leg? I'm like, you stupid sheep. And just jam it on my shoulders. Like, how many times I told you?

Right? Doesn't that seem more natural? And when God, when God pursued us, how can God feel joy? When we were full of sin and disobedience and rebellion, we're the sinners.

We need to repent. We're sinning against God himself. That's who we're sinning against. And yet, when he found you, listen, he was not angry. He was not disappointed.

He was not frustrated. Listen, he loved you and he picked you up and put you lovingly on his shoulders and rejoiced. He rejoiced when he found you.

That's his heart. That's what he feels. Nothing but pure joy for us. See, this is what this shepherd anticipated. He anticipated, when I find this sheep, I am going to feel so much joy.

[42 : 49] Why is evangelism often difficult for us? Because we don't see the joy in it. It just seems hard. It seems messy. It seems like it won't work. At least there aren't any guarantees.

It seems scary at times and uncomfortable. And sometimes these things are true. But there is an incredible joy on the other side.

Listen, there is nothing in this world that will bring you more joy than seeing someone come to know the forgiveness of their sins through Jesus Christ. Yes, it can be hard work.

Yes, it can be scary. Yes, it takes time. Yes, it takes sacrifice. But there is a joy that awaits an inexpressible joy.

Maybe one of the reasons that we don't sacrifice to reach men and women with the gospel is that we just haven't tasted this joy very often. We don't know what it's like.

[43 : 47] Jesus does. The Savior sees the joy. Now, the parable of the lost coin adds a very interesting twist. Just look at it real quickly. It's the same exact points that it's making.

Look at verse 9. This lady who lost her coin and she's looking for it. Verse 9 says, and when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors saying, rejoice with me for I have found the coin that I have lost.

Verse 10, just so I tell you there is joy before the angels of God. This is interesting. What does that mean? Joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Who is this rejoicing? You know, a lot of times we say that, you know, when sinners repent, the angels rejoice. That's not what this is saying. Listen to Charles Spurgeon. He says, we often say of the angels that they rejoice over one sinner that repents.

I doubt not that they do. But the Bible does not say so. The Bible says there's joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents. What means the presence of the angels?

[44 : 49] Why? That the angels see the joy of Christ when sinners repent. Hear them say to one another, behold the Father's face, how he rejoices, gaze on the countenance of the Son. What a heaven of delight shines in those eyes of his.

Jesus wept for these sinners, but now he rejoices over them. It's Jesus who is rejoicing. God is the one filled with joy. He's rejoicing. And I think the angels are speechless because they can't believe that God rejoices over us so effusively, given our sin and rebellion.

See, God is not a stoic. When you were saved, he didn't just do like a little golf clap. No, he rejoices. He is a God that longs for the lost to come to him and he takes great delight and joy when they come.

And he wants us to share in this joy. He wants us to see it. He wants us to taste it. You know, one of the things I find amazing about this parable is that Jesus didn't just tell us a story about how God has compassion and he takes action and he pursues and initiates and perseveres and sacrifices to save the lost.

He didn't just talk about it. He did it. He carried it out. Just a few chapters from this parable, Jesus enters Jerusalem.

[46 : 10] He was determined to rescue us from certain doom and destruction. We were the lost sheep. Jesus hung on that cross. He was killed and crushed and absorbed the wrath of the Father because it was the only way that he could save his sheep.

The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. This was not theory for him. He did not just talk about it. He did what no one has ever done and what no one could ever do.

He endured the beating and mocking. He drank every drop of the cup. He was willingly forsaken by the Father and paid the greatest price imaginable to rescue us. And you know why he did it?

He says it was all for the joy set before him that he endured the cross scorning its shame. He sacrificed for joy and he's calling us to do the same.

He wants us, he wants you to share in the joy of proclaiming the greatest news that's ever been told, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

[47 : 22] Lord, we thank you that this was not just a story for you. This was not just theory that you, the good shepherd, laid down your life for your sheep.

Lord, we thank you that when you found us, you were not angry with us even though you should have been. You were not disappointed. You didn't punish us.

You didn't break our legs. You lifted us high upon your shoulders. And I just pray right now, God, for those who are discouraged, those who are unaware of your love, struggling to feel your love.

I pray that right now they would see your amazing love, that they would see that you lifted them high up on your shoulders and you came home with them rejoicing.

I pray that no one here would ever doubt your amazing love for them. I pray that we would just feel ourselves riding on top of your shoulders, rejoicing because it's who you are.

[48 : 52] And I pray that you would use this picture to motivate us to reach the lost. In Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.

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