

Luke 15.1-7 The Lost Sheep Restored

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[0:00] We're in Luke chapter 15, and our text this morning will be verses 1 to 7, and what is in verses 1 to 7, 4 to 7 is a parable.

And a parable, when Jesus speaks parables, he speaks truth, he speaks it metaphorically, and he does this to confute and confound the self-righteous, but to encourage the repentant.

So what are parables? Parables are stories using metaphors as signs. So these words as metaphors are signs that signify something else.

They signify another thing, and they require explaining. So a couple questions we want to ask before we dive into the text, and as we work through the text, understand what is the meaning of this parable.

First of all, what do they signify? What do the things in the parable that we're going to read signify, and where did Jesus get the terms? The terms that he uses, do you think he just kind of made them up on the spot, or did he use specific terms from somewhere that the people he was speaking to would understand meaning behind them?

[1:13] Now, last Lord's Day in the evening, we went over the hermeneutics, the science and art of interpretation, and the rule of Scripture, or the analogy of Scripture, in that Scripture interprets Scripture, using clear parts of Scripture on the same subject to understand Scripture.

So that's what we will do today. We will use Scripture to interpret Scripture. Now our text, as I mentioned, is Luke 15, and we will read 1 to 7. Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to him to hear him.

And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

So he spoke this parable to them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which 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 have found my sheep, which was lost.

I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

[2:48] Lord, we thank you again for this day and this Lord's Day. We thank you for your word, and we pray that as we seek to sit under the ministry of the word, that you would attend the preaching by your spirit and illuminate your word to us, that you would grow us in our knowledge and understanding of divine truth.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, what I want to bring to your attention in this parable in Luke 15, 1-7, is that Jesus Christ is the good shepherd whose messianic seeking and saving produces restoration, celebration.

So I'll say that again. And Jesus Christ is the good shepherd whose messianic seeking and saving produces restoration, celebration. So I'll draw to your attention, first of all, from the parable, the ninety-nine, that is the indictment of the ninety-nine, and then the one, that is the search and rescue of the one, and then finally the restoration celebration.

So there are sheep in this parable divided into two categories, the ninety-nine and the one. So what the ninety-nine signifies, what the one signifies, and then restoration celebration.

So first of all, the indictment of the ninety-nine. Now, to understand kind of the context of what's going on here, notice in verse 4 it says, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness?

[4:18] So the ninety-nine are in the wilderness. What does a wilderness mean? And ask yourself, when you read a parable, always think, who is he speaking to? And whoever he's speaking the parable to, expect them to be in the parable, and what would they understand this word to be?

So he's speaking to the Pharisees and scribes, who are experts in the Old Testament. So maybe your mind, because you've read the New Testament, you might be jumping to maybe Revelation 12. But when Jesus is speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, Revelation 12 hasn't been written yet, so don't go there.

What would they be thinking of? What would they think of when you mention the wilderness? Well, they would think of the wilderness wandering. So what's going on here where the Pharisees and scribes are complaining, and in his parable, he speaks to them about the wilderness.

So here, these complaining scribes and Pharisees, what can we say about them? How can we describe these complaining scribes and Pharisees? Well, they're self-righteous, they're unrepenting, they're unbelieving, and they're grumbling ethnic Jews.

And what to them would come to mind when Jesus says wilderness? When they hear wilderness, they would think of the wandering of the grumbling, complaining Israelites who did not trust God because of their unbelief.

[5:41] And because of their unbelief, they did not enter into the promised rest in Canaan. So something is starting to take shape here of the 99 who are in the wilderness of this parable.

And there's also a distinction that's made between the wilderness and the shepherd's home.

It was just kind of jumping ahead. But when the shepherd, the good shepherd, seeks and saves the lost sheep, he leaves the 99 in the wilderness, and he brings the lost sheep to his home, not back to the wilderness.

So there's a distinction made that the wilderness is not the home of the sheep owner of the good shepherd. So there's a distinction that's made there. So this is the wilderness.

This is the setting in which the 99, and understanding who the 99 signify, this is the setting of which they're in. And notice that whoever these 99 are, they are left in the wilderness.

[6:42] So as I mentioned, when a parable is, when Jesus speaks a parable, expect whoever he's speaking to for them to be in the parable.

So expect it to signify those who are present. So the setting here, as we read in verse 1, is who's present? There's the tax collectors and the sinners. We can make that one category.

The second category is the Pharisees and the scribes. And although this isn't directly in our text in 16.1, we see his disciples are also present. But those categories are the tax collectors and sinners who draw near to Jesus to hear his words.

And then the other category is the Pharisees and the scribes. And then Jesus who's speaking it. So expect the parable to signify those who are present. Who is Jesus speaking to? There's Pharisees and the scribes.

John Gill on this text on the 99, because we're trying to see who do the 99 signify. So on the 99, he says, The self-righteous scribes and Pharisees that murmured at our Lord's receiving sinners are meant.

[7:51] These were sheep, at least were in sheep's clothing. They were nominal professors and belonged to the Jewish fold. Now these Pharisees and scribes were experts in the Old Testament.

And they were supposed to be shepherds that feed their sheep. And they are supposed to seek out the lost. But here we see they are grumbling against Jesus for receiving sinners.

Now to go back even further in time than Gill, Augustine, He wrote that the 99, which means 99, Left in the wilderness may set forth the proud who have a wilderness in their mind.

So we think of wilderness, think about the wilderness wandering with the unrepentant, unbelieving Jews who murmured and grumbled. The 99, these grumbling, self-righteous Pharisees and scribes who think that because they are righteous, they do not need to repent.

So we also see in our text the unrepentant, in the end of verse 7, the 99 just persons who need no repentance. So these 99 are unrepentant, they need no repentance.

[9:07] The self-righteous and self-justified 99, they don't have any perception of a need of repentance. And repentance unto life is a saving grace.

So without a need of repentance, without repentance, there is no salvation, there is no saving grace. So what is repentance? If they need no repentance, because they think they need no repentance, because they think they are righteous, what exactly is repentance?

Because remember, Judas Iscariot, what he experienced wasn't repentance. He had remorse for his sin, but he didn't apprehend the mercy of God.

So what is repentance? Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, there it is, it's not a self-righteous person, but a sinner, someone who realizes that they are a sinner.

Whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. So what's apprehension? Apprehension is to lay hold of something. They've laid hold of the mercy of Christ.

[10:14] So whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does with grief and hatred of his sin, there is a change of mind about sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after new obedience.

These 99, these Pharisees and scribes, who were self-righteous, did not think that they needed to apprehend the mercy of God. They didn't see themselves as sinners, and they were grumbling about the sinners who came to Jesus, in whom he received.

So in other words, those who do repent are not self-righteous. Mark 2.17 says, I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

So these 99 who are left in the wilderness, they have here their indictment. So the indictment, the Pharisees and scribes, remember, are supposed to be shepherds.

They're experts in the Old Testament, and being experts in the Old Testament, they're to feed God's people. And I want to bring your attention to two Old Testament texts, because being experts in the Old Testament, when they hear words that signify something, the Old Testament is going to come to their mind.

[11:33] So when Jesus uses specific words, it's to bring to their attention something from the Old Testament. I was going to read Jeremiah 23. I'll leave that for you to chase down later for the sake of time, but I will read to you parts of Ezekiel 34.

I'm not going to read it all, just certain parts, and I'm going to skip from part to part, so definitely feel free to follow up later, Ezekiel 34. But listen to what it says. And I think this is what would have come to mind of the Pharisees and scribes when Jesus said this parable.

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, thus says the Lord God to the shepherds.

Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You do not feed the flock. You have not sought what was lost.

So they were scattered because there was no shepherd. My sheep wandered, and no one was seeking to search for them. Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds.

[12:41] For thus says the Lord God, listen to this, Indeed, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. And will I seek out my sheep and deliver them from all the places, all the places where they were scattered on a 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. Listen to this, I will feed them in good pasture. And their fold shall be on the high mountain of Israel where they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

I will feed my flock and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. Listen to this, I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick. And then in verse 23 it says, I will establish one shepherd over them and he shall feed them. My servant David, he shall feed them and be their shepherd. So if you know in Ezekiel, you might be doing your math.

Well, when Ezekiel was written, David was dead. So what's this reference to about one shepherd, my servant David, because David's dead? Well, it's the descendant of David according to the Davidic monarchy, which when you read the beginning of Matthew, you see it's Jesus Christ.

[14:02] So we see here an indictment of the Israelite bad shepherds who are supposed to feed the sheep but are not. Instead, they are greedy. The sheep are scattered.

But who is it that will seek and save the lost sheep? According to this text, the Lord himself. So now we're starting to see a bigger picture about who this sheep owner or the good shepherd might be. And if somebody's claiming to be that good shepherd, according to the Old Testament, who they are claiming to be. And I think there's a lot more behind these words of why the Pharisees and scribes were not very happy with Jesus.

Because the scribes and Pharisees, what's going on here right before he says the parable? What are the scribes and Pharisees doing? They're complaining about Jesus receiving the tax collectors. Jesus here is accusing the scribes and Pharisees of being the bad shepherds.

[15:07] Bad shepherds do not feed the flock but they feed themselves. These bad shepherds do not seek the lost. And ironically, because who's the first category of people mentioned?

The tax collectors. And tax collectors back then were greedy and they took from people for themselves. So they should be the ones that are seen as greedy but it's the bad shepherds, ironically, that are the greedy ones.

They are the self-centered stealers and the repentant. These repentant tax collectors are the lost sheep who were scattered by the bad shepherds and are sought, found, and restored.

So the indictment of the bad shepherds implies that the good shepherd has come. So secondly, the search and rescue of one.

And to understanding this category of one and the search and rescue of the one, we want to examine the sheep owner, the lost soul, and the restoration of that lost sheep.

[16:12] So first of all, the sheep owner. Notice how it says, what man of you having a hundred sheep? So here in the parable we have a sheep owner who has a hundred sheep. And these one hundred sheep signifies the whole human race.

And the whole human race belongs to God. In Psalm 24, when it says, the whole world and everything that is in it belongs to the Lord. So the sheep owner owns the whole human race.

And in this parable of a sheep owner and a sheep, there is a shepherd, a shepherding motif. Now remembering that who he's speaking to, these Pharisees and scribes, are experts in the Old Testament.

And if you're an expert in the Old Testament or if you're at our service, it's this service here this morning, what in the Old Testament might come to mind with a shepherding motif? I'm going to bet all of you are probably thinking Psalm 23.

And in Psalm 23, verse 1, it starts by saying, the Lord is my shepherd. So we're starting to see a picture here from both Ezekiel and Psalm 23 of who this shepherd is, who this good shepherd is.

[17:25] One shepherd who will seek and save the lost sheep and that is the Lord. So who is it and the narrative and the gospel narratives that is this good shepherd?

In John 10, 11, Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. So we have the one, that is the lost soul.

Who else is present in the parable? Remember, expect them to be in the parable in some way.

Well, it's the scallywag sinners at the beginning. The tax collectors and the sinners.

Those, and what is it about them that's occurring? It's that they've come to Jesus to hear his words and he receives them. He receives these sinners as they draw near to him to hear him speak.

They are lost sheep who know that they are sinners. They don't think that they are righteous. They don't think themselves to be self-righteous and in no need of repentance. They know that they are sinners.

[18:34] So the lost sheep, while it's one lost, the one in the parable, the lost sheep is the individual sinner representing all of God's elect in their fallen state.

that is, they're lost in Adam and they're going their own way. All we like sheep have gone astray. Wandering astray, this lost sheep does not come to the sheep owner but goes astray and is lost until the good shepherd comes after, finds, and rescues it from the miry pit of sin and death, lays hold of the lost sheep, carries it upon his shoulder and personally brings the rescued sheep back to his home.

So to summarize that, Jesus has bought, sought, and brought his lost sheep home. He seeks and saves now. So while Jesus' physical body is in heaven, how does he now seek and save the lost?

Now, he seeks and saves by his word and spirit by effectual calling. What is effectual calling?

Effectual calling is the work of God's spirit, word and spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, a sinner, not self-righteous, He seeks to embrace our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, the gospel, and renewing our wills.

He does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered in the gospel, to embrace, to lay hold of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. So the restoration.

[20:22] We see the sheep owner, the lost sheep, the lost sheep is found, and then the restoration. Back to Psalm 23, which we will look to to help understand this parable.

Christ, who is the good shepherd, in Psalm 23, 3, it says, he restores my soul. So Christ, the good shepherd, restores the soul of the lost sheep.

That is to say, he reclaims anyone who is a believer, anyone who has been saved by Christ, we can say, he reclaims me from wandering and causes my soul to be renewed and rejuvenated to life. And then further in Psalm 23, it says, he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. for whose sake? It's not because of my merit, it's not for my glory, but the glory of his own name.

The back of the parable, what happens next? It says, he lays it on his shoulder. The lost sheep is sought out, found, and carried back on the shepherd's shoulders.

[21 : 32] The burden and the consequences of the straying sheep has been carried on the shoulders of the good shepherd according to his humanity and now on his shoulders according to his almighty power.

Further in Psalm 23, in verse 4, it says, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. What is the valley of the shadow of death? It's in this life amongst the sorrows and the deep darkness of a sin-cursed world.

In this life, we are in a sin-cursed world and we will experience deep darknesses and sorrows of a sin-cursed world that is like the valley of the shadow of death.

But, the restored sheep can say, you are with me. And in Psalm 23, when it says, you, who is it that is with the lost sheep or the restored sheep?

Who is with the restored sheep? Who is you? You is a covenant-keeping God. So that means when in the deep darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, it's not based on our subjective feelings and it's not based upon my lovability that God is with me, but because of God's covenant-keeping faithfulness that he is with his restored sheep.

[22 : 50] And what about after death? What can the restored sheep say about after death? Well, in this life, we can say, you are with me. We'll be certain that after death, I will be with you.

I will be with the covenant-keeping God. So the good shepherd seeks and saves the lost and brings them home for a celebration.

So third, the restoration celebration. Celebrating the Savior. Notice what it says in verse six.

And when he has found it, so actually before that, let me go back. There's the lost. If he loses one, so there's a lost sheep.

And then five, and when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulder rejoicing. So lost, found, rejoicing. Now in verse six.

[23 : 47] 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 have found my lost sheep, which was lost.

Who has done it? Who has sought, found, and restored the lost sheep? Praise the Lord, is the good shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Now in what I just read, you might have noticed a repetition of words, but in reverse. Lost, found, rejoiced, and then it's reversed. Rejoiced, found, lost.

So if you were to, I guess for you, it would be lost, found, rejoice. It's kind of like an arrow pointing to something. Lost, found, rejoice. Rejoiced, found, lost.

What's this arrow pointing to? What's in the middle of rejoicing? Because there's lost, there's found, rejoice. What's rejoicing? What's in the middle of rejoicing that this is pointing to?

[24 : 50] What's in the middle is this, when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors. So, amidst, in the middle of this rejoicing, is this statement, when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors.

Remembering the distinction between home and the wilderness. There's a distinction between home and wilderness. So home, in which he comes home to, is not the wilderness, in which the 99 who do not need to repent are left.

So there is, within this, coming home and calling together friends and neighbors, rejoicing. So what we have here in the middle of rejoicing is a restoration celebration.

And we might ask the question, when and where is this referring to? It's both already and not yet. So we'll examine them separately.

But this celebrating of the Savior, the already. The already is in this life, in this state of grace. So when a lost sheep is found and restored, we're in a state of grace, not yet in a state of glory, which

is yet to come.

[26 : 05] So the already is the state of grace in this life. Back to Psalm 23, it says, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

What's going on here with the preparing a table before me and a restoration, celebration in this parable? Well, in Psalm 23 and also in this parable, we see from being a lost sheep in reference to first as a lost sheep to now being a guest at a celebration.

And that guest at the celebration is rejoicing in the unmerited favor of the celebration host. Who is the celebration host of Psalm 23, 5 and out of this parable?

It's the good shepherd. It's the sheep owner. And it says, when he comes home. This celebration, this restoration celebration occurs when he comes home.

And when we think of the already that is in this life on this earth in a state of grace, ask yourself the question, the good shepherd's home. Does God have a house here on earth?

[27 : 20] If you've memorized 1 Timothy 3, 15, say it in your head and what does it say? But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you want to conduct yourselves in the house of God. There is a house of God here on earth and that is the church, the church of the living God.

So does Jesus have a house on earth? Yes. The house of God, the church. So Christ, the good shepherd, restores the lost soul. So this lost soul now belongs to his home and he places the restored sheep into a church for feeding in green pastures.

pastures. In Psalm 23, we read about green pastures and the green pastures are the means of grace, the word, the sacraments and prayer in the house of God.

And at the Lord's Supper, the restored and gathered sheep celebrate the good shepherd that is celebrate the Savior given for us.

So the already and then the not yet. When he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors. The not yet is the consummation of Christ's kingdom in glory, in a state of glory.

[28 : 37] In Psalm 20, back to Psalm 23 to understand in verse 6, it says, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. forever. So belonging in this life on this earth, belonging to a church is to dwell in the temple of God.

In the Old Testament, we see the temple is a physical temple and a geographical location, but with the New Covenant, the temple is a spiritual temple composed of saints as living stones built on the foundation of the teaching of the apostles with Christ as the cornerstone.

So there's a spiritual temple and the church, belonging to a church is to dwell in the temple of God, which is a foreshadowing and an anticipation of the spiritual paradise temple.

It's a garden city, a paradise garden city spiritual temple in glory and church is a foretaste of it. The means of grace is a foretaste of it.

The Sabbath rest is a foretaste of eternal rest. Keep your finger here, we're going to come back, but flip over to Revelation 19, 6-9 for a glimpse of this.

[29 : 54] Revelation 19, 6-9a. And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns.

let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright for the fine linen and the righteous acts of the saints.

Then he said to me, Write, blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Jesus has bought, sought, and brought home his lost sheep.

John Gill wrote, They are brought by the power of divine grace as trophies of it, as to their own home, and such that Christ takes into his arms and on his shoulders, he never drops them till he has brought them safe to heaven.

Now a couple of concluding uses that we can take of this text. First of all, to summarize and briefly understand what these words, what these metaphors signifies, what they are signs of.

[31 : 14] The 99, this category of the 99, the 99 signify, first of all, the bad shepherds which are indicted in the Old Testament, the Pharisees and the scribes, but it also extends to all the proud and self-righteous who are left unregenerate in this world.

Over one sinner who repents and over 99 just persons who need no repentance who are left in the wilderness. The sheep owner or the good shepherd is Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate who came to seek and to save the lost in his coming, his living, his suffering, and his dying as a

substitute and his rising in power.

What about the one? The sheep are divided into two categories, the 99 and the one. What does the one signify? The one or the lost sheep is a synecdoche. Synecdoche means a part representing the whole.

So the one lost sheep here signifies all of God's elect. So if you are a Christian, if you are a believer today, then this signifies all God's elect whom Christ came to seek and to save, namely sinners of whom I am chief.

You see here the big distinction between the one and the 99 is that the one sheep is lost and knows that they are a sinner. The ones who are left are unrepentant because they don't see themselves as a sinner and needing to turn to Christ for salvation to apprehend the mercy of God.

[32 : 57] Isaiah 53, 6 says, All we like sheep have gone astray. While verse 7 says the 99 just persons who need no repentance, it doesn't mean that there are people in this world who are just according to their own works and do not need to repent and turn to Christ for salvation.

All we like sheep have gone astray. All of us have sinned against God and God is just and righteous and holy and his justice demands punishment and wrath for sin.

All we like sheep have gone astray but he has laid the iniquity of our sin on Christ, on our good shepherd. And Christ, that's why Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

He came into the world the incarnation, the taking to himself a body, the assuming of our nature in order to not only to obey the law for a righteousness but to suffer and die as a substitute to pay the penalty of sin, to satisfy divine justice for God's sheep whom he bought, sought, and brought home. And all those whom repent. In this parable there's the tax collectors and the sinners, these scallywag sinners and rascalion tax collectors, they know they're sinners.

[34 : 18] sinners, they know that they see the misery of their sin and they are aware of it and they come to hear the words of Christ and Christ receives them.

What the distinction is here between the 99 and the 1 is the one who recognizes I am a sinner and I need salvation. I need the blood of Christ to pay for my sin.

I need the righteousness of Christ to be made right before God and does repent, does turn from sin and death and this world to Christ and apprehends, lays hold of, embraces the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

Benjamin Keech, a little particular Baptist, he wrote, he writes on the parables and I wish I could read a whole lot more but for the sake of time, I've condensed it to a very short part to read but he says, when Christ brings a lost sinner home or unto his house or church on earth, he stirs up all his saints and members there to rejoice.

The saints below rejoice. I don't want anybody here to miss that so I'm going to say it again. When Christ brings a lost sinner home or unto his house or church on earth, he stirs up all his saints and members there to rejoice.

[35 : 40] The saints below rejoice. Christ rescues his lost sheep through his coming, his living, his doing, his suffering, and his dying as a substitute for his wandering sheep.

He brings them home first on earth, the already, by placing them into a church through baptism as an external sign of the internal reality of being united to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. And the Lord's Supper is the ongoing celebration meal of the saints on earth. So praise God to the glory of his grace because today we rejoice that the good shepherd has found, rescued, and restored a lost soul and we rejoice in part as an emblem of that great rejoicing and glory.

The saints being perfectly blessed and the full enjoyment of God forever in a world without end.

Amen. Our great God, we praise you for your marvelous work and plan of redemption.

We praise you and thank you, our Lord Jesus Christ, that you, the good shepherd, came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. and Lord, we thank you that you are effectually seeking and saving your lost sheep.

[37 : 09] We thank you for the church which is an emblem of glory and we thank you for our hope of this paradise, garden, city, temple, sanctuary in glory.

and we thank you that you are building your church here on earth and we pray that you would continue to do so. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll stand and sing Gloria Patria.

Amen. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end.

Amen. Amen.