

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Stories Jesus Told

No 4

One Lost Sheep and One Lost Dowry

Scripture Reading: Luke 15. 1-10

Three Groups Gathered Around Jesus. There were the Pharisees (and the scribes) who considered themselves interpreters of the Law and a demonstration of righteousness which could be earned by conforming to their interpretations. They separated themselves from all who would not submit, people like the tax gatherers who had sold their services to Rome and immoral or irreligious people who showed them no respect but here they were all gathered around Jesus. The disciples too were there, listening and learning. There was a lesson for each of these listener groups.

Jesus did not merit the approval of the Pharisees. They said, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" v2. 'So Jesus told this parable against them' and their values v3.

Only One Lost Sheep

There were ninety nine others. Why put the whole flock at risk to recover mere 1% when that lone individual may even now be beyond recovery? Each individual is of infinite value to God.

Have you ever thought about how a sheep gets lost? It follows its nose.

Right in front of it is a tuft of grass, so it goes for it, then to the left, now to the right, on and on, straying ever further from the group. Getting lost is not intended, but lost it is. People are like that selecting the dainties of the world, tasting, flirting, enjoying. Then it is too late.

A strayed sheep is helpless. They might stray back again to the fold. Most often they do not. It must be sought, found and restored by the shepherd.

As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. Ezekiel 34:12.

Consider the Shepherd's grief at the

loss of just one sheep. It was more than an economic waste. Eastern shepherds of yester year knew each sheep individually and they knew him and felt secure in his presence. He sought *his* sheep.

Sheep know when they are in trouble.

They may not know how to handle their situation, some times hurt, often frightened at their situation, they look to be rescued.

He laid it on his shoulders. He carried his sheep in his heart. He did not drive the sheep home from the wilds of the world and the crevasses of corruption.

This parable shows the value of one. If all people were righteous, except one, Jesus would still have needed to come and die, just for that one. How many people have felt themselves to be that one?

How far apart were Jesus and the

Pharisees! Hear their taunt, "This man welcomes sinners!" More than that, He rejoices, Ring the bells of Heaven. They considered themselves righteous, Heaven's favourites- but could not see themselves lost. How about us? Do we

describe ourselves; sheep, shepherds or pharisees? Or are we part of all three?

One Insignificant Lost Coin

These ten coins, silver drachmas, although of small, perhaps just a labourer's day's wage, were a woman's dowry, probably in form a headdress, an heirloom of mainly sentimental and ceremonial value. They were received from her mother and were to be passed to her daughter intact. To lose one of these coins was an acute embarrassment. Without it her life was incomplete.

The coin is not like the sheep. The sheep's wandering was something it did. Unlike the prodigal son who deliberately walked away from his family, the sheep' wandering was unpremeditated. The coin however was lost due to providence, an incident not of its own doing. These three lost things represent three classes of lost people, the wanderers, the unaware, the belligerent. The search for each was different. The searcher adopted different strategies. And so must we in the discharge of our stewardship of the Gospel.

The sheep wandered afar and the search was extensive, but the coin was close at hand, in the woman's own home, and her search was intensive. These lost ones are close by wherever we are. People everywhere are unaware that they are lost. The methods employed for the recovery of each are different.

The woman lit her lamp. The home of the ancient Eastern poor was often but one room without a window for light or ventilation, or perhaps very small

windows and a low doorway. A lamp was needed to aid the search. The light was for the searcher, not to attract the coin. So we too need the light of God's word to instruct and direct us in our work.

The coin was lost in the dust.

Most likely the house had an earthen floor. It is said that dust would accumulate unnoticed and the coin slid easily out of sight. To find it she had to remove every gathering of dust and examine it in the light. There at last she uncovered her treasure. Looking for the unknowing lost is like this. The searcher often needs to sift through much that is unresponsive until they find that for which they are looking.

The climax of these three parables is the rejoicing in Heaven, at the recovery of what was lost, a small almost insignificant item, but one of great value. All end in the call to rejoice.

The 99 'righteous.' Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and their view of themselves. 'Righteous' is here a parable comparative and we interpret it in that context. It is not a point of doctrine and it should be considered such. Parables are a unique form of literature and attract some unique rules of interpretation. See Study N° 1 in this series.

Acknowledgements: Christ's Object Lessons, *Ellen G White*, Signs Publishing Co, Warburton. Undated. Bible references are from the NIV, but some are free translations used to expand word meanings.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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