

“Key Words In A Parable”
Luke 15:1-7

For many people, Luke chapter 15 is one of the best loved chapters in the Bible. In that chapter, we have the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost boy. Someone has dared to call this chapter “The Gospel in the Gospel.” These parables are so familiar that we are often tempted to skip over them quickly and miss the tremendous spiritual truths in them. Some of these great spiritual truths leap out at us when we pause long enough to examine some of the key words in the parable of the lost sheep – Luke 15:1-7.

I. The word LOST – Luke 15:4

Anything is lost when it is out of its rightful place. A sheep is lost when he has strayed from his spot in the flock or fold. A person – made in the very image of God – is lost when that person is not in a right relationship with God – the Divine Creator.

Most of us have great concern when we lose anything – especially when something we treasure is lost. A friend of mine recently discovered that an old postcard collection which was given to her years ago by a family member could not be located after a move to a new house. Rightly so, her concern was great. In the days of Jesus, sheep were valuable and great concern came when one was lost. In like manner, Almighty God – who values every person’s life – is concerned when any person is lost – living out of a right relationship with God. As Christians our concern for lost people should be great.

II. The word UNTIL – Luke 15:4

I must confess that many times I have read and studied the Lord’s parable of the lost sheep without giving much attention to that little word “UNTIL.” This was true of me until that day years ago when I heard an elderly black man preach an entire sermon on the word “until” found in the parable of the lost sheep. It was an inspiring and challenging sermon preached in Greensboro, North Carolina. The preacher said that the concerned shepherd did not search for that lost sheep UNTIL he got tired, or until the weather got bad, or until it got late at night, etc. The shepherd searched for that lost sheep UNTIL he found the sheep. What a message!

I don’t know about you, but sometimes I get tired and start feeling that it is time to start thinking about “throwing in the towel.” When I do, I remember that challenging sermon and then I remember also Galatians 6:9 where Paul says: “Let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.”

III. The word REJOICE – Luke 15:5-6

William Barclay tells about the practice of a responsible shepherd going out and finding a lost sheep while friends and neighbors watched and waited.

When the successful shepherd came back carrying the sheep across his shoulders, the people would stand and shout with praise and thanksgiving. They would REJOICE.

God is like that! There is rejoicing in Heaven when a sinner repents and turns to Christ – when a lost person is found.

Realizing how terrible it is to be lost – for now and for eternity – and knowing the joy which finding and winning the lost brings to the heart of Almighty God, our constant and consistent message to the world should be:

Souls of men! Why will ye scatter like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts! Why will ye wander from a love so true and deep?
Was there ever kindest shepherd
Half so gentle, half so sweet,
As the Savior who would have us come and gather round his feet?

For the love God is broader than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind.

As Christian people, let us faithfully witness and work until the lost experience salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. And then let us rejoice with each other and with Almighty God and the angels in Heaven. Amen

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