

Parables – Lost – myfishbites.com

Intro

When I was a wee lad wondering round a department store in my home town of Birmingham, I lost my mom. I was overwhelmed by the big racks of goods all around me. No way could I see over the top so I went round the store trying to find my mom. Increasingly worried but determined not to panic, I eventually found her to my relief.

Everyone can speak of losing something, maybe very valuable, even temporarily. We all know that feeling when we've misplaced something that we want or need.

The Parables

These parables appear in Luke 15.1-10 and can be effectively summarised in Verse 10:

'In the same way there is joy in heaven.. when one sinner changes his heart and life.' (paraphrased)

The Pharisees

These guys were upset with Jesus because he not only welcomed sinners, he was eating with sinners as well. How dare he! This was contrary to the law and to their over-inflated egos. These sinners were people for dissing, not for eating with. Who did Jesus think he was?

POINT - These guys missed the point again. They were so obsessed with their rules, religious ideas and sense of high authority, that they had forgotten what the law was really about - loving God and loving other people. In our churches and youth work let's not forget our mission is to the stranger, the poor and needy, to support - not a club where we go to slap each other on the back and tell each other how good we are. Let's also learn not to disrespect other Christians but to accept their mission for God is equally valid as ours.

The Lost Sheep (also in Matthew 18.12-14) and The Old Testament

Today when you travel through counties like Devon you'll see that sheep have markings on them. They often have a brand so a farmer can identify his sheep in case of loss or theft. The Bible tells us that all God's people have a marking, in the Lamb's book of life - see Revelation 21.27.

When Jesus chose to use the example of sheep it will have been because people could easily relate to the picture of a shepherd and his flock of sheep.

But the imagery and language Jesus used goes much deeper. Today we see how Jesus was speaking about himself as shepherd and his people as the sheep, following their shepherd..

In Genesis 48.15 we first find God called a 'shepherd' in a blessing given by Israel to Joseph. We find that God has led Israel throughout all his life like a shepherd. In Numbers 27.17 we find Moses talking to God asking God to provide the people with a shepherd to lead them. The famous Psalm 23 starts with the words, 'The Lord is my shepherd'. Go read it and see the results of following the Shepherd.

So the audience hearing Jesus speak would be aware of the Old Testament verses that talk about God being a shepherd. The more learned ones may well have picked up the hidden meaning behind the story even before Jesus revealed it.

POINT - The use of stories is very cool. If we can make them relevant than all the better. Church often does a good job in making the relevant gospel very irrelevant. Let's speak words that people can hear and understand. So maybe it's time to start ditching some unhelpful words and traditions, or at least explaining what they mean and why they happen.

Jesus Is The Good Shepherd

So we know that God was referred to as the shepherd. So let's look at John 10.1-21. In this we find that Jesus is describing how the sheep only follow their shepherd. He then describes himself as the door into the sheepfold and then in verse 14 he calls himself the 'Good Shepherd.' We also find that Jesus speaks of giving his life for the sheep.

Many shepherds throughout history have died protecting their sheep. But Jesus was speaking of something much greater, of dying on the Cross so that he could take our sin and put it to death, then rise again so we could go to Jesus and have our sins forgiven. This was what Jesus meant.

In Revelation 5 we have an amazing picture of Jesus - a Lamb that looks as if it had been killed - the Lamb of God, Jesus - bearing the scars of his death on the Cross. But Jesus is the only one who can open the scrolls in heaven (see verses 9-10).

This would all have been very offensive to the Pharisees who did not believe Jesus was the Son of God.

Still, truth is not dependent on whether people accept or reject it. Jesus is the truth whether or not people choose to believe it!

Let's think about the characteristics of a shepherd - he looks after his sheep, cares for them, leads them, treats them if they are unwell, looks out for them, protects them from wolves, guides them. This is a picture of Jesus and us.

Let's think about the characteristics of sheep - they know the shepherd's voice, they trust him, they follow him, they know that with him around they are safe. This is a picture of our relationship with Jesus.

Party Time

Do you like parties? I'm not really into parties as I'm a quiet kind of person. But I do like big events and gigs! Thing is, in heaven there's a whole load of parties going on and there's nobody that won't like them!

So what kind of party? New Year's Eve is big across the world. But heaven has legions of angels doing their nut when someone gets saved - they are seriously mad for it - and so is Jesus. That's why it's so exciting and moving when someone gives their life to Jesus. It's also a very cool thing. All around the globe at big events, in churches and on the streets, people are coming to faith in Jesus like never before.

If heaven gets excited about this, it gives us a clue that we too should be excited and passionate about people coming into the Kingdom of God thru Jesus.

You see, if you had a cure for cancer you wouldn't keep it to yourself. Yes, you'd probably patent it but you'd be telling everyone - here's the cure, this is amazing! It's the same with the Good News. It's so exciting, so awesome that you gotta be insane or full-on churchified not to get excited about it!!

Our Mission

The Bible says, 'The eyes of the Lord look over the earth..' (go see 2 Chronicles 16.9). In one way we can see this is like Jesus looking all over the place for the lost sheep, the lost person.. someone who doesn't know God yet or someone who's kind of fallen away from God. Jesus seeks them out and then moves in their lives.

How cool is that. If you are a disciple of Jesus then know that Jesus was looking out for you and he found you! He doesn't find you just to discard you on the tip and notch up another 'conquest' like some sad bloke talking about how many women he's got off with. No, Jesus has called you for a purpose and in time he'll open the door for you. Our job is to hear the shepherd and obey.

But our job is also to be like Jesus. We need to be seeking out the lost sheep, the hurting, the people who don't know Jesus, the mate who doesn't come to church any more. We need to be looking out for any opportunity to share the Gospel with people. We may well be somebody's chance to hear the Gospel. Don't miss it.

We make sure we don't miss out by reading the Bible, praying and asking God to show us. We then have to be listening to that little voice that says, 'go speak to that guy over there and tell them.. (fill in the blank). That's how it is. God wants to use us and guide us. If you do miss God's voice, that's OK, just say sorry to God and start over.