

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## THE LOST SHEEP

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18TH JULY 2020

Today is the 100th beacon. 100 beacons! That is an amazing landmark.

I was thinking about the number 100 and where it's found in the bible and I immediately thought of Jesus' parable of the lost sheep. Luke 15 says:

"Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

This story teaches us a few things. Firstly, it shows us that God cares for each of us individually. He cares for you personally and He will search you out, no matter how far away you go. No matter what you do, if you want to return, He will welcome you with open arms and in fact there will be rejoicing in heaven if you do. All you need to do is realise that you need to repent and turn back and choose to do so. To repent means to let go of the bad things we do and turn and walk the way that Jesus wants us to walk. Our attitude needs to be one of repentance, one of knowing that we don't always act the way we should and knowing we need Jesus to forgive us.

This parable has been used in the black lives matter movement and I think it is used correctly. There has been the argument that all lives matter as a response to

the black lives matter movement. No one would deny that but there is a need right now to protect people that are more at risk of harm. Jesus valued all the sheep but there was a particular need to help the one who was lost. We need to value everyone, but give particular focus to those that need it at a particular time. Now the BLM movement is very political and has an agenda behind it that I don't fully agree with and to be honest it isn't particularly clear what should be done, but as Christians we should be for justice and equality and not let our own position of privilege cloud our judgement. Just because you don't face racism doesn't mean it doesn't happen and just because one group is gaining attention, it doesn't mean you don't matter.

Another way to think about this parable is to look at it from the point of view of the sheep. After all, this is our role in the parable. Imagine being a lost sheep out in the cold, alone, unsure of where to go and then your shepherd takes you up into his arms and carries you home to your brothers and sisters. That sheep now has a brand new start. That sheep can start again. That sheep will always remember the day it was rescued and should remember to not get lost again. It should remember that this is where it belongs and stay in the fold. Jesus gives us a new start when we become Christians, but also every day we ask for forgiveness. Every time we realise we have messed up and need to be forgiven God will pick us up and put us back on the right path. There's no need to dwell on what we used to do wrong, just like there's no need for the sheep to remember and dwell on the time it was lost. But it is good for the sheep to remember it was rescued for two reasons. One the sheep will have proper gratitude towards the shepherd who saved it. It will remember that the shepherd gave it its life back and show the shepherd the proper respect and love. Two, the sheep will hopefully remember that being lost was not where it was supposed to be, so the sheep won't again wander off on its own.

When we take communion, this is a great time to remember it. Every time, as Christians, we take those emblems, we are declaring that we remember what Jesus has done for us and that we repent again of anything we are doing wrong. We need to repent every single day. We need to do this daily because we sin daily, and we need to often remember that we have been forgiven and can start again. As humans we so quickly forget, especially the good things. Also, if we remember how much we have been forgiven, this leads us to forgive others which is good for both us and them and if you want to hear more about forgiveness please listen to the beacon Leave it all behind. We need to be quick to forgive and give people second chances. Someone once said, "holding on to anger is like

grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned." That is so true. When you don't forgive someone else you are the one who gets hurt. You are the one who will be suffering and dwelling on the hurt and the other person will probably move on. So, remember how much you have been forgiven so you can forgive. It's better for you.

We are about to have another big change coming out of lockdown. A landmark time and a time for starting new things. So, we need to remember but we also need to move on into a new time. We need to have new year's resolutions as it were. This happened when we went into lockdown and people started all sorts of crafts and exercise and reading. I'm sure people also made spiritual resolutions like reading the bible more and praying. If we made this sort of life-giving resolution, then we need to use this time of change to remind ourselves to keep going. If we didn't maybe now is the time to start. Now we are putting our normal routines back in place, it is the time to incorporate more of God's presence in our day to day lives. It will give us so much life.

I find it hard to do things when it seems like there is no progress being made or that I'll just have to do again. As a child I would get very frustrated when I would have to clean my room or tidy anywhere or even do things like brush my hair because it seemed pointless because the next day I'd have to do it again and sometimes we can feel this way about prayer. We get frustrated because we aren't progressing towards a goal in a straight line, but life takes us through all sorts of twists and turns so we will have to pray and pray and pray again. Sometimes it will seem like we're being ignored, and it won't seem like we are making progress in our Christian walk every time we pray, but it is so important that we keep going. It is so important that we never stop starting again. We pick ourselves up and get back on the path every time we fail.

So we are the sheep and God is our shepherd. We need to remember the landmark moments in our faith and remember the fact that we have been redeemed but forget the wrongs others have done and not beat ourselves up about our own. We need to repent every day when we mess up and if someone decides to make the life changing decision to come to Jesus for the first time that will cause massive celebration in heaven.



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