

August 12, 2018

## ***"He who has ears, let him hear..."***

***"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he find it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost."***

Matthew 18:12-14

***"There was a man who had two sons..."***

Luke 15:3-32

The Apostle Peter wrote, ***"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*** (II Peter 3:9) Peter wants us to understand just how far our God and Father will go in trying to save us from condemnation; just how much he values us.

Jesus told a number of parables during his ministry to showcase this same principle. In one of the parables he talks about a shepherd with his sheep again. This parable is recorded in both Matthew 18 and in Luke 15. In this parable our Lord tells about a shepherd tending his flock when one of his one hundred sheep wanders off.

This shepherd will, the Master says, ***"...leave the ninety-nine in open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it."*** The shepherd is willing to risk all the others to save this lost one. Last week we talked a little about a woman who loses a coin and turns out her whole house looking for it. As we explained, the women in those days often wore the family's savings account as part of their head band. Losing one was a serious blow to the family's wellbeing so the effort to find the coin reflects that importance.

In the well-known third parable about the lost son Jesus recounts the story of a younger sibling who demanded that his father give him his inheritance early so that he could 'do his own thing'. He moved away from his family and lived a totally selfless life until his money ran out, and finally, in a horrible state, he ***"...came to his senses..."*** At this point he realizes that his situation is his own fault and he is truly repentant.

When he returns to his father with this honest repentant attitude he is warmly welcomed home and fully restored to his place in the family. Sadly, his older brother is not so forgiving and resents that restoration. Like a lot of us, he struggles with the belief that his brother should pay some price for his stupidity.

In these parables our Lord is trying to help us understand just how important our salvation is to our Father. God will go to great lengths, even to the point of allowing his one and only Son to die on the cross, to rescue us from our own sin. Jesus tells us, ***"...there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."***

Of course after our study of the Roman letter we should understand that there is no one in this second category. No one is righteous and everyone needs to come to repentance and our God is doing everything he can to bring us to that point. However, he will not make us repent. Our repentance must be our own choice.

So, like the lost son, we must often come face to face with the terrible cost of our own sin before we will repent of those sins. Like all humans we would rather blame and justify than acknowledge that our own choices have brought the problems we experience.

True repentance can only happen when we are willing to own our choices and the consequences for those choices. Our Father is searching for us and waiting for us to turn to him. He longs to restore us to our place in his family. But the choice to turn to him will always be, up to us.

