

Luke 15:1-10; Zeph. 3:14-20; The Pursuing Shepherd I. The Recipients of this Pursuit II. The Manner of this Pursuit III. The Completion of this Pursuit

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how long would you search for a lost quarter? Not too long- I suspect. Most would not even know a quarter had gone missing. But what if you had lost your car in a parking lot. I imagine you would keep looking until you found. The fact is, the more important something is to us- the more time we will invest in finding it if we lose it! Well, today we catch a glimpse of how much we mean to Jesus in the parable of the pursuing Shepherd. Last week we saw the cost of discipleship revealed. Jesus warns the “would be” disciples to consider carefully if they truly believe and identify with Jesus. The cost is great- as you need to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. We must renounce all and follow Him. This week, we find that Jesus has renounced all to gather us! Luke 15 as a whole contains many of our favorite parables. As this chapter develops, there is a movement from the less to the greater. We start with losing 1 of 100; next we lose 1 of 10 and finally we lose 1 of 2. The amount returned- or the percentage restored after being found increases from 1% to 10% to 50%. Today we see this theme: Jesus Christ reveals His joyful devotion in the parable of the Pursuing Shepherd.

I. The Recipients of this Pursuit

We start with the recipients of this pursuit. Who is it that Jesus goes after? Who is the object of His devotion? Well, no surprise here- once again we see that Jesus passes over the rich, proud and self-confident for the poor, humble and lowly. He gives grace to the meek while casting the exalted aside. Jesus has no qualms about receiving sinners and fellowshiping with tax collectors. As our text opens in v. 1- it was not the Pharisees and the Scribes- but the sinners that were being gathered in. The outcasts of society- these are chosen to shame the proud. These were entering in while the Pharisees scoffed- what kind of man associates with the lowly like this? This brings to mind what Luke 5:30 says, Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. He as the good physician came to heal those who were sick. Jesus has no time for the smug, self-righteous bluster of the Pharisees. Nor does He want the fickle, praise and popularity seeking crowds. Rather, He came to seek and save the lost! To restore and redeem sinners! And this is good news- the fact that no one is too lowly for His gaze! None are too dirty for His embrace! None are so far afield that they cannot be found and gathered in! This also reveals the surprising contract. When we

compare direction of the OT ceremonies, we find that uncleanness is contagious. The sinners are to be kept far from me lest I become polluted. But Jesus cannot be polluted! Rather He embraces and makes the unclean, clean! He dines with sinners and makes them saints! He is so generous and so pure, than nothing can dirty His hands! So then, who does Jesus go after? Wandering sheep! Straying lambs. Those who should know better, but they have been tricked by sin and are now alone and afraid! Those who have been lead astray by various passions and lust which rage within. Who gets the grace of being found? These little lost lambs! Those who do not deserve it! We all like sheep have gone astray as Isaiah 53 says- we have wandered away from our God! Yet our God so loved the world that He sent His Son to be the pursuing shepherd who finds and gathers His sheep!

II. The Manner of this Pursuit

Now that we see ourselves- and indeed all sinners- as the one who are pursued by Jesus- in our next point we find the manner which Jesus uses in this pursuit. What is immediately evident in v. 4 is that Jesus is the ones who goes out in search of the lost. Although we are perfectly able to get lost on our own, it is Jesus who sees that we are lost! It is His initiate that begins the pursuit! He makes the first move- it is He who goes out to find! Just as it was in the beginning, after Adam and Eve rebel it is the LORD that goes to them- searches for them and find them! He comes to fallen man- and praise God that salvation dose not depend on our desire! Does not depend on our choosing Him first! He is committed to finding- they are His sheep in fact! They already belong to Him! They are His property- and He will not abandon them! As an aside- when we compare this parable and the parable of the Prodigal Son- we find that in this parable the focus is on Jesus finding us- the focus is on our inability to find or to save ourselves. In the Prodigal Son, we find that the lost son must eventually come to his senses and acknowledge that he is in fact lost! So now we find the manner of Jesus pursuit. The first thing we find is that Jesus leaves the 99- these 99 sheep are safe in a desolate or secluded place. He leaves them where they are. Note- Jesus does not in the end lose these other 99- but remember the focus is on the one who got away! Now 99 out of 100 is not bad- right! But for Jesus, missing one of the elect- losing one of the children of God- is not an option! He will not allow one of those given to Him by His Father to remain in this lost state! Now if you lose a penny- I imagine you would not even bother to go

back and get it! But Jesus is not like us- He is not willing to lose any that belong to Him! Now picture for a moment that I take my whole family to Walmart- and when I arrive at home afterwards, I discover I only have 3 of the 4 kids with me. Would a good father say- well- 75% is not bad? I don't think so! In the same way, Jesus will not leave even 1 of His brothers or sisters behind! And after He find- He picks us up and carries us home on his shoulders. He is so happy- as we will see in our next point- that He will not put us down until we arrive safely at home! The fact that Jesus has this perfect care and concern for the lost is in fact the good news of the gospel! Remember- Jesus will find and He will save His sheep! Note that v. 5 begins- when He finds. Not if- but when! It is only a matter of time until Jesus finds all of His elect- gathering all His sheep together- and then He will take us all home to our eternal pasture! Jesus will be very thorough in His search- no mountain too high no land so remote- as to keep Him from finding His little lost lamb. He is dedicated to this pursuit- and He will do it! He came to see and save the lost! Praise God that our salvation does not depend on our ability to find Jesus -but on His ability to find us! And those who enjoy this found status- will we not also share our shepherd desire for the lost as well! Should we not also have a heart for- even pursuing those who have strayed? Let us remember that Jesus also uses means- and you are one of His means He uses- to seek and gather those who are lost!

III. The Completion of this Pursuit

Now that we see His perfect dedication and commitment to finding the lost, what remains is the completion of this pursuit. What happens when Jesus is successful? It is interesting that this parable spends only 1 verse on the manner of pursuit- while 2 verses explain the consequence. The bulk of this parable is not about the sheep- not even spend describing the time of pursuit. Rather the focus of v. 5-7 is on the emotional response when that pursuit ends in success! The major emphasis here is on this one word- rejoicing! In Greek the work is "Chairo"- to be filled with gladness- to have exceeding and overflowing joy! And who has this joy? First of all, we find the joy of the shepherd! Note that Jesus does not rebuke, reproach or scorn them- He does not even punish this rebellious little lamb. Rather He rejoices! Let us never think that God is unemotional- that He is cold and calculated without any delight! Consider Heb. 12- For the Joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross. Or as we read in Zeph. 3:15- He

will rejoice over you with gladness, He will exult over you with loud singing. He will gather those who mourn -I will save the lame and gather the outcast! Our God rejoices in the salvation- in the search and recovery of just one of His chosen ones. I remember hearing of a young child lost in a corn field growing up- to be found 2 days later. What kind of Joy do parents have when they find their lost child? So our God rejoices over His people. But not only that, our God invites other into this joy as well. As v. 6 continues, there is a community wide rejoicing as well. Jesus friends and neighbors. This would include the saint who have gone before, the angels in glory as v. 10 states- and even the church on earth today. In heaven there is great rejoicing when a lost one is gathered in. So also, the church on earth should reflect this joy! In the life of the church, baptism and profession of faith- and especially the repentance and restoration of a sinner- must be times of joy! Rejoicing in the continued work of Jesus Christ! Let us not frown or fret when others are gathered in- as we find in this text. You see, this parable was already taking place- in their midst! Jesus was finding the lost lambs- these sinners and tax collectors were being gathered by the Shepherd- and Jesus was rejoicing over them! He was filled with gladness to see their rescue from sin and bondage! However, the Pharisees refused to rejoice- the scribes chose to grumble instead of give thanks. We will see more of this next week. There is one more person who rejoices though- and that person is the lost and now restored lamb! As Jesus stated back in 10:20- rejoice that your names are written in the book of life! The sinners were drawing near to Jesus- and rejoicing in the free gift of salvation they were receiving! They were glad in being found by Jesus! So let us also rejoice when others- and we ourselves are gathered into His fold!

To conclude, the opening parables of Luke 15 are beloved by many because they reveal both the devotion of Jesus in finding His lost ones- as well as the rejoicing that takes place when that lost one is restored! Jesus Christ reveals His joyful devotion in the parable of the Pursuing Shepherd. So let our hearts be glad that Jesus has found us- and let us be dedicated to and rejoice when others are gathered as well! Jesus calls us- bids us to come. But He has also gathered us- He has brought us here! We are gathered by our loving shepherd- gathered now to eat and drink with joy in remembrance of Him!