

- Publicans & Sinners (Luke 15:1-7, 7:40-47, Matt 1:21)

#1. All We Like Sheep (Isa 53:6, Matt 18:12, Rev 11:2, Gal 1:8-9, Gal 3:13-14)

- Jesus Calls Them by Name (John 10:3-5,14-16,26, 6:37, 11:52, 6:44)

#2. He Brings Them in, One by One (Luke 15:4, John 20:21, 2Cor 5:19-20)

- He Leaves the Ninety and Nine (Luke 15:4,7, 1Sam 17:17,20)

#3. Rejoice With Me (Luke 15:5-7, Matt 18:13)

- We Shall Rejoice with Him (Psalm 126:5-6, Isa 40:17, Mark 8:36-37, Luke 15:1,5, Heb 12:2, Jam 5:16)

Please open your Bibles to the Gospel according to Luke, Luke 15:1 (2X). The story we are going to cover is that of a Shepherd, a Good Shepherd, who has lost one sheep, and now He goes diligently after that which is lost until He find it.³The title of the sermon today is, **‘Eu>Until He Find ItX/b> (2X)**. Even though the Lord is speaking about sheep, He actually has in view people; and particularly He has in view two groups of people: In one group are publicans and sinners, and in the other group are scribes and Pharisees. This is not an actual scenario; this is a parable for the purpose of teaching us some principles about the Gospel of salvation. We read in Luke 15:1-7,

Luke 15:1-7 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Is it not amazing how often the Lord Jesus attracted publicans and sinners? They were drawn to Jesus. They were outcasts in their own society. Their fellow Jews branded them incurably sinful, deserving Hell and on the way to Hell, and they received no mercy from the scribes and Pharisees. But from Jesus they did not receive such treatment. It does not mean that Jesus condoned their sins, but with Jesus they found mercy. With Jesus they found that it was possible to have a new life, a new beginning. Something similar is going on today when people are branded "alcoholics", or "homosexuals" They are treated as if they are physically sick, and they have an incurable disease: "Alcoholism", or "affinity for the same sex" Well, if the disease is incurable, they have no hope of ever being cured of it. But God does not call it a disease. God says it is sin; it is a dreadful sin, and by His grace we can stop it. There is hope for sinners; we can be cured of it. The Lord Jesus Christ can save us from our sin. Our God delights in mercy and God the Holy Spirit can give us a new heart, so that we do not desire that sin any more. That is the hope for sinners. But did you know, there is another reason why the Lord Jesus was so often surrounded by publicans and sinners? It is true that they found mercy with Him, but the Lord was demonstrating that such mercy comes only to those who realize that they are grievous sinners; not just little sinners. The Lord Jesus gave an example of this principle when He told Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7:40-47 a parable about a creditor who had two debtors, one who owed him a fair amount of money and another who owed him a large sum of money. Since they both had nothing to pay, the creditor forgave them both their entire debt. Which of the two is going to love him most? Obviously it was the debtor who had been forgiven most. Then the Lord Jesus stated this principle: To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. The corollary is that those who realize that they have been grievous sinners will love Christ most. Of course, the man in the parable of Luke 15:1-7 represents the Lord Jesus Christ. The lost sheep represents any one of us who go astray. But among the many questions we might ask, the first one should be:

"How is it that anyone of us could get lost?" How is it that NONE of us actually could find our way back home? The answer that the Bible gives is that we all are in bondage to sin. We could not find our way back to God because we all were born as voluntary slaves of Satan, and Satan controls the mind of everyone who is still unsaved. If God does not pursue the sinner, the sinner shall never come to God. That is why God must choose certain people unto salvation, or else no one will become saved. In order to save God must deal with the problem of sin in that person. The problem of sin must be dealt with in two ways, #1, sins must be atoned for so that there will be peace with God, and #2, sins must be cut out of the life of the one who is saved. Both of these are addressed in Matt 1:21, **Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.** This verse draws us immediately to the Lord Jesus. Here is God's answer to the sin problem: God will provide a Substitute who will atone for our sins, and God will provide a dragon-slayer who has the power to cut us off from the power that makes us slaves of sin and Satan. Let us now develop this from the beginning.

#1. Isa 53:6, All We Like Sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isa 53:6, Matt 18:12, Gal 3:13-14)

It is true that everyone of the human race has gone astray. God says: **There is NONE righteous, NO NOT ONE!** But in Isa 53 God is not speaking about everyone in the whole world. God did not lay the sins of all the people in the world on the Lord Jesus, but only "the iniquity of us all", which means the sins of all of us whom the Lord Jesus came to save, which means "all the elect". All of us were born as lost sheep in this world were Satan is the prince of the power of the air, and all of us sooner or later come to realize that we are lost sinners in need of a Savior. And God makes sure that all of us will sooner or later be drawn to the Lord Jesus, until our number is complete. Please turn to the Epistle to the Galatians, Gal 3:13. The 100 sheep are a picture of the complete set of all the elect of God. The principle that God is teaching us here in this parable is: **Not one of them will remain lost. They all will be found. God committed Himself to save all who were written in the Book of Life of the Lamb before the foundation of the world. Now, how did this one get lost? And how was he found? God says in Matt 18:12 **How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?** **Xb>All we like sheep have gone astray.** We went astray from the day we were born. But let us be clear about this: This sheep does not represent a sheep that was found and got lost again, and was found again. In other words, this sheep does not represent a "Backslider". This sheep does not represent a person who was saved, and then wandered away from the faith, and then was saved again. O NO! There are no "Backsliders" in the Kingdom of God. The Bible teaches that the saints will persevere in the faith. If you find that you are presently living a life away from God, then you have never been saved. Now, that is a surprise to many, but this is what the Bible teaches, that there are no backsliders in the Kingdom of God. The saints in the Kingdom of God adhere to the Perseverance of the Saints. However, there are many who depart from a congregation, but we do not call them **Backsliders** for these are not Christians who backslide into sin and later emerge as Christians again. We should recognize that there are many more unsaved people in the church than there are truly saved saints, and that it always has been this way. The**

worldwide church may be described as consisting of three parts, in the way it is described in Rev 11:2. We read in Rev 11:2,

Rev 11:2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months.

You see, the largest portion of the church is symbolized by the city of Jerusalem representing the False Church, and consisting of those gospels that are characterized as other gospels in Gal 1:8-9. These people are unsaved, because they are under the hearing of a false gospel, and thus God does not save them. Then the court outside the temple proper symbolizes the Show Church, consisting of people who mingle with the saints, and worship with the saints, and are under the hearing of the true Gospel perhaps for ten years, but they never get saved. God has not given them faith. Then there is a nucleus of saints who are truly saved, and these are symbolized by the temple proper; this is the Eternal Church for which the Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died. And thus we have the False Church, the Show Church, and the Eternal Church. People in the Eternal Church do not fall away, for they are preserved by God the Holy Spirit. But people from the Show Church and from the False Church do fall away. And when they fall away it is possible that in the future they would come back to the church, but we would consider them like anyone else who enters into the church from an unsaved condition. These are not considered backsliders. Nevertheless, when they leave the congregation we deplore the loss of them, and we pray the Lord that He will bring them back. We continue to pray for them, for we have come to know them and we continue to love them, not as a brother or sister in Christ, but as a dear soul who needs to hear the Gospel all over again. And then, if someone does turn from his sins and come to the Lord, we consider them as one of the sheep whom the Lord has found.

And how was this sheep found? The Shepherd must Himself seek that which is gone astray. The Shepherd must come into this sin cursed world; the Shepherd must take on a human nature; the Shepherd must be subject to all the Laws of God for mankind; the Shepherd must seek out all the sins of everyone of His sheep, take those sins on His own account and on the cross be subject to the wrath of God upon all those sins, and suffer for those sins the equivalent of the penalty that God has determined for those sins, which is an eternity in Hell. And then the Shepherd must take away the desire to sin from the person whom He intends to save. That is the great mercy of God. And that is why we read in Gal 3:13-14, ☉/span>Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.³ Before we were saved we were at enmity with God. Christ came to reconcile us to God in this way. Therefore the saints have peace with God and are not afraid to stand before God when their bodies die.

- **Jesus Calls Them by Name** (John 10:3-5,14-16,26, 6:37, 11:52, 6:44)

Please turn with me to the Gospel according to John 10:3 (2X). We all know that Jesus died on the cross to save His people, but that was almost 2000 years ago. What did the Lord Jesus do in the 20th century to find us and draw us out of this wicked world? In the Gospel of John, chapter 10, Jesus says that He is the Good Shepherd, who came to seek out His sheep. The Lord Jesus said in John 10:3, ☉/span>To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his

voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. Now, read carefully what God has written here. It does not say: "He calleth **the** sheep by name", but it says: "He calleth **His own** sheep by name". His own sheep were those who had been given to Him by the Father from all eternity. And when He calls them, all of these sheep must come to Him, for the Lord says in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me." These sheep are all the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and they are all going to be found. When the Lord Jesus speaks of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He is not strictly speaking of the Jews, but He is speaking of all the elect, who are all the sheep that belong to His household, because Christ is the Israel who this refers to. To unbelievers the Lord Jesus is saying: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep", in John 10:26. Now, is that not exciting? The Lord Jesus knows our name, and He calls us personally, one by one out of the fold wherever we were, and takes us into His fold. Have we heard His call? John 10:3 says: "The sheep hear His voice"; John 10:4 says: "For they know His voice"; John 10:5 says: "They know not the voice of strangers." The Father chose us to be the Bride of Christ; is it not exciting to hear the voice of the Bridegroom? He knows us, and we know Him. That is what God says in John 10:14, I am the Good Shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. Then He says in John 10:15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Wow! He knows us as intimately as He knows the Father. And because He knows us and loved us, He was not only willing to lay down His life, but He did lay down His life for the sheep. For which sheep did Christ lay down His life? It was only for His sheep. All others in the world He passed by. He passed by the goats, and the wolves, and the false shepherds and all others that know not God. John 10:16 and other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one Shepherd.

Here the Lord Jesus is speaking about His elect worldwide. He speaks about all His other sheep in the world who were not present in the ring of disciples that were around Him at that time. He lays down His life for "all the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). And did you notice that Jesus did not say: "Other sheep I shall have", but He said: "Other sheep I have". They were His already, because the Father gave them to Him from eternity past. Jesus did not say: "If they are willing to listen", but He said, "they **shall** hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one Shepherd. People are not drawn to Christ by their own free will, but by the will of God. This too is a surprise to many. The Gospel of John is very clear in stating that we are not saved by our own free will but only by the grace of God. Please turn to John 6:44 (2X). We have already seen many instances of God's sovereignty in John 10. But clearer yet, God says in John 6:44, No man **CAN** come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. It is amazing to me that there are so many people who insist that their salvation came because they made a decision to follow Jesus. I did believe that when I first came to faith in Christ, because I believed what the preachers on the radio said. Surely they should know, for they have studied hard and they have read the Bible many more times than I have. But then when I have read the Bible myself, and I read Ephesians chapter 1, and Romans chapter 9, and many other passages that reinforce the principle that God is the only one who is controlling all of history, I discovered that what the Canons of Dort teach they teach it very faithfully. God, in His wisdom elected people unto salvation,

for if God would not take this initiative no one at all would be saved. Out of love for His elect, His children, the Bride for His Son, God sent the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth to pay the full price for the sins of all His elect. This is the only way anyone can be saved. And that is why He calls us by name, and that is why He has mercy on us wicked sinners, and that is why He gave us the grace to be sons of God.

#2. He Brings Them in, One by One (Luke 15:4, John 20:21, 2Cor 5:19-20)

Let us now return to the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 15. The Scribes and Pharisees were murmuring against Him, saying, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them". What an awful thing this Jesus of Nazareth is doing? Can He not find better company to eat with? And then Jesus told this parable to the Pharisees:

Luke 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?3

If I may paraphrase, Jesus says: If any of you Pharisees would be in this situation, and you would have lost one sheep, would you not go after that lost sheep until you have found it? How much more should you expect this of the Good Shepherd who cares for the souls of every single one of His people? He brings them in one by one. Not one of them may remain lost. Did you notice that the lost sheep do not come to Him? The Shepherd must go and find them one by one. Every effort is focused on finding that one sheep, and then the next one, and then the next one. No cost is too great; every possible hindrance is put aside. But now let us look at the record. When the Lord Jesus went back to Heaven, and the faithful disciples gathered in the upper room, how many faithful were there? Only 120. That is not much. How can the Shepherd bring in the millions of saints who initially are lost sheep? Well, we have to understand God's methodology in bringing salvation to His elect. Jesus said in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you", and God said in 2Cor 5:19-20, "He hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation". "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ". We have been appointed to be the witnesses in this world, witnessing of His death and Resurrection for His chosen people. But realize now that it is Christ who is seeking and saving that which was lost. We are just instruments in His hands. It is God who does it all. Now, is that not a great relief to us? We are not perfect preachers like Jesus was. We stumble over our words and sometimes we mess things up. But God did not say that we must give a perfect Gospel presentation to a dead person. A dead person is dead; he cannot hear. We only have to be a willing instrument in God's hand. God does it all. Therefore, to our comfort, we do not receive the credit, and we do not receive the blame either. But God asks us to be a useful and loving instrument in His hands. He does not ask us to be the judge, the jury and the executioner; He does not ask us to catch flies with vinegar; He does not ask us to hit people over the head with the Law and with condemnation; but He asks us to be a witness of the love of God as manifested in Christ crucified. God tells us to love the unlovable and bring the Gospel to them. God tells us to pray for them, and to pray without ceasing, for they are the ones to be pitied. Remember, they have nothing. God tells us to pull all our resources together to feed the spiritual food to those who have none. They are fellow human beings whom we try to bring the whole counsel of God, but they will only receive it when God decides that their spiritual ears will be opened. But they are made in the image of God, and thus we should value them as such. That is why we are here. That is why we have a church, so that we can jointly serve God's purposes with our

substance. And then, if it pleases God, He will bring them in one by one. But we are presently living near the end of time when the Bible says that the number of saints is decreasing, not increasing. Therefore, if it pleases God to bring us only one, or even none of His sheep, we should rejoice, for this is the will of God, and He is far wiser than anyone of us. He brings them in one by one also means that we do not get into heaven on the coattails of our parents, but each one will be saved individually. But now, what about the ninety and nine? Does the Shepherd not care for the ninety and nine?

- **He Leaves the Ninety and Nine** (Luke 15:4,7, 1Sam 17:17,20)

Luke 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?Xo:p>

Whom do the ninety-nine sheep represent? First of all, they are sheep; they are among the elect. Jesus said in verse 7: These are ninety-nine just persons, which means that they already are in His sheepfold, which means that they have already been saved. But why does Jesus leave them in the wilderness? This means the wilderness of this world. We know that Jesus "will never leave us nor forsake us" in this world. He will never abandon those who have put their trust in Him. Why then did He say it this way? We find the answer when we look for the great type of the Lord Jesus in the O.T., David the son of Jesse. In 1Sam 17 the brothers of David are in the army of Saul.

1Sam 17:17 And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched *corn*, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; (Then we read in verse 20) 1Sam 17:20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.

Then David fights Goliath, and you know the rest. David did not leave the sheep alone in the wilderness, but he left the sheep with a Keeper. The Lord Jesus does not leave the ninety-nine sheep alone in the wilderness, but keeps them protected with a Keeper, which is God the Holy Spirit. The word "repentance" in Luke 15:7 is only emphasizing a common character trait among the ninety and nine who have already become saved. The Lord Jesus said: "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" because they have already confessed and repented. And so, the Savior is rejoicing,

#3. Rejoice With Me (Luke 15:5-7, Matt 18:13)

Luke 15:5-7 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Here is the application of this parable. When anyone of us has become saved, Christ puts us on His shoulders, so that we cannot be lost again. Paraphrased the Lord is saying to us: "Thou art mine forever. In My hands I hold thee, in My arms I fold thee, I am thy Redeemer. I will not forget thee, and I will care for thee." God's grace is given freely to whomever God wants to bestow it. And our response to this grace that God has bestowed upon us is equally a gift from God, is equally a miracle done by the love of God that has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Our response is that of immense gratitude that God has done such a wondrous work in our hearts. Let us not forget

that our whole life is our response of gratitude, and we must be grateful for everything that God brings into our life, for He knows what we need. And so, let me bring up the subject of love again. If God so loves us that He offered His only begotten Son so that we can be saved from our sins, how is it that we would not love Him in return? If the Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to love one another, how is it that we would not even begin to love one another? What is the answer to these questions? The answer is that we are not sure if God so loved us. The answer is that we in our insecurity have not stepped out in faith to love the brethren, because we do not trust them. In our insecurity we hesitate to live the life that the Lord has called us to, and thereby we have missed the abundant life that the Lord has promised to all those that believe. The damage is to ourselves, not to others.

Now **another question**: Think about the ninety-nine sheep again. Why would there be a rejoicing if the ninety-nine who are left in the wilderness could go astray, while the Good Shepherd is seeking for the one sheep that was lost? That would not make much sense, would it? But the answer to this question is given in the Gospel According to Matthew. There we read in Matt 18:13, And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. And so, the ninety-nine went not astray, because they have already been saved, and they are under the safe care of a Keeper. The Bible does not disclose who that Keeper might be, but we can interpret that He probably is God the Holy Spirit, because He is also our Keeper.

Another question: Why should there be rejoicing in this day and age? We see works gospels creeping into most churches, divorce and remarriage are acceptable in most churches, women as deacons and elders are approved in most churches, Gay is OK in most churches, the Sunday is no longer the Lord's Day but it has become a day in which men pursue their own pleasures, most churches have adopted the concept of "Backsliders" which are sometimes called "Carnal Christians", most churches have adopted or are very tolerant about speaking in tongues, or having dreams and visions from God, most churches do not preach any more about Hell, or about Judgment Day, or about the fear of God, and most churches teach that there is a glorious 1000 years coming with Christ reigning from Jerusalem and the Jews evangelizing the world. Not only are all these errors dreadful sins, but these are sins which are presented to God in a Christian Church, and they are leading people astray who should know better if they were studying the Bible, but they are not. These are phenomena that are associated with the end of time. People are becoming more wicked because the love of many has grown cold. But we should jump out of that mold. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and that is why we want to be different. So why should there be any rejoicing in this day and age when we see church after church go down the drain, dragging their members with them into Hell? The Lord Jesus answered this question in the Parable of the Lost Sheep, here in Luke 15. He rejoiced when only one sinner was saved, in other words: when only one lost sheep was found, "he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing". Here is our example. We should be rejoicing if only one sinner is found by Jesus. Please turn now to Psalm 126:5 (2X).

- **We Shall Rejoice with Him** (Psalm 126:5-6, Isa 40:17, Mark 8:36-37, Luke 15:1,5, Heb 12:2, Jam 5:16)

This is a joy and a rejoicing that is different from that which most people know. It is a joy that is accompanying the experience when someone is saved. Anyone of us who have been witnessing, and perhaps have experienced that someone through our efforts as instruments of God became saved, can testify to the fact that it brings very great joy. It is a joy that is greater than the world has to offer. This is what drives us to go to work to bring the Gospel here or there. In every saint there is that urgent desire to be a witness, and to be part of an outreach effort to save souls throughout the world. For example, just imagine our joy when someone becomes saved for whom we have prayed for years? It is indescribable. Therefore, never give up praying for that person whom we presently have in mind. Three times does the Lord Jesus say in this parable that He is rejoicing when only one sinner comes to repentance. In verse 5, "He layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing". In verse 6, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." And in verse 7, "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth". He brings them in one by one. This is also expressed in Psalm 126:5-6, and there we read,

Psalm 126:5-6 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. **He** that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

These verses are not speaking about a farmer's fortune in his field. They are speaking about sowing the seed of the Word of God, and rejoicing when God gives the increase. And just like the farmer's harvest entirely depends on what God decides to give him, so the spiritual farmer depends entirely on God to give the increase. Please turn in your Bibles to the Prophecy of Isaiah, Isa 40:17 (2X). And so, when we engage in this business of sowing the seed of the Word of God, do not wait rejoicing until we see ten or thirty souls come to life. Only one is enough. We are in the business of robbing Satan's treasure chest. And when only one soul has come to Jesus, remember what the Lord Jesus said in Mark 8:36-37, **For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?** That is the value of just one soul. We are familiar with that. One soul that is saved is of greater value than this entire material world with all its kingdoms, and cities, and houses and cars are worth. So, do not wait rejoicing. The return on our investment is greater than any stock can give you. This is the most profitable business we can get our hands into. But let us now also see the reverse side of this coin. We read in Isa 40:17, *all nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.* What is this? The Lord Jesus said that one soul was worth more than all the treasures of this world. But you see, in Isa 40:17 the Lord was speaking about the unsaved nations; the nations that know not God. And when we bring the Gospel to them, and one soul will be saved, that soul will rise in value to be worth more than all the treasures of this world. Can you see the value of evangelism? Can you see that Satan is not the winner in this battle, even though the number of unsaved people is far greater than the number of saints? In the end Satan will hold a worthless bag of trinkets, for all the value is in the souls of the saints. As a corollary, any Church that decides to cut their evangelism program is committing suicide. But there are more reasons why we can rejoice: We too will not be lost. We read in Luke 15:1, **Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.**

If Jesus could love the publicans and harlots and rejoice in their salvation, then there is hope for me too. In fact, no matter how great my sin, that sin also can be forgiven. How can we know that we too have been forgiven by Christ on the Cross? First look at the parable and then look for the evidence in the life of the sheep. We read in: Luke 15:5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

When the Lord Jesus has put this sheep on His shoulders, this was one sheep that could not get away until He came all the way into His heavenly home. This was one sheep that got to know the Lord Jesus very well, and this was one sheep that led a life very close to the Shepherd. This was one very blessed sheep. That is the lesson we learn from this parable. How can we know if we too have been forgiven by Christ on the cross? Look at our own life and look for the evidence like we saw the evidence in the life of this sheep. Do we find in ourselves an earnest ongoing desire to do the will of God? Do we find in ourselves a desire to get to know the Lord Jesus through His Word? Do we find in ourselves a desire to live very close to Jesus? Are we happy about that, or do we want to break loose? Ask ourselves these questions, and try to give an honest answer, for Christ is watching. Christ will go after us and He tells us to continue pray for those who are lost until He has found us.

And if we have found that the Lord Jesus has indeed suffered and died for all our sins, because we have this unexplainable desire to live very close to Him, then there is great rejoicing in our heart. Then our life will be directed by Him, and we will be happy about that, and we will be "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God", from Heb 12:2. Our whole life will be directed upward. We are no more living for some fleeting pleasures of this life, but our focus is on the life to come. That is indeed a cause for great rejoicing. When the Lord Jesus said, 'have come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly,' it means that He will give us a life that is fuller, and richer, and more enjoyable, and more abundant in all things. He will give us this more abundant life through giving us the full assurance of our salvation. Think of it what this means. It means that we have been His child all along, from the day we were born, and thus everything that He brought into our life was for our benefit, was for our good, and was for our growing up as a child of God. Think of all the death and destruction that He has brought in our life, it was all designed to lead us to Christ, and to give Him the glory. It means also that our present situation in this life was totally designed by God to be this way, and was designed for us to give Him thanks and give Him all the glory. O yes, the entire purpose for which we were created is to give Him all the honor and the glory. It also means that the future belongs to Him. But here the Lord gives us some added joy. God says in Jam 5:16, The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.³Of course we should keep in mind that this was said within the context of evangelism and salvation. But think of the joy this would bring if those whom we fervently pray for would be saved before the Lord returns. Let us believe this promise that The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.³This is part of the abundant life that the Lord promised us. This life is abundant because we are looking forward to the coming of the Lord, and in this forward look we are greatly rejoicing that He comes for us. He has found us.

To sum it up, in this Parable of the Lost Sheep the Lord Jesus was seeking for one of His lost sheep, me, and He saw me from a great distance away: He saw me before the foundation of the world, and He saw that I was walking on the road to Hell. He caught up with me and passed me by for a moment, and went to where I was going: Hell. There He paid for my sins, and on His way back He picked me up, and put me on His shoulders and He will carry me home all the way to heaven.

AMEN. Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.