

luke 15.¹⁻⁷

¹Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”

³And he spake this parable unto them, saying, ⁴What 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? ⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And 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. ⁷I 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.

This reading is our 29th for Lent 2025.

1. Luke records, as do Matthew and Mark, many instances of Jesus sitting down to eat with people.
 - ? With whom do you sit down and share a meal?
 - ? Are there people and classes of people with whom you would be unwilling to share a meal? Why? What does your reticence say about you? And about them?
 - ? What does Jesus’ sitting down and sharing a meal signify to the attendant diners?
 - ? What was it about Jesus’ sitting down and sharing a meal with sinners and publicans that the religious leaders found so objectionable?
 - ? How does the introductory information of verses 1 and 2 shape your understanding of the parable?
2. Jesus speaks of one lost sheep among a hundred.
 - ? In the matter of salvation, how many sheep out of one hundred actually become lost at one time or another?

Later, Jesus speaks of “ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

- ? Who are the “just persons” “which need no repentance”?
 - ? Given that everyone is in need of repentance, why does Jesus speak of “persons” who, in fact, do not exist?
 - ? How do you feel about Jesus showing a degree of sensitivity to the Pharisees and scribes, who think of themselves as “just persons,” while at the same time trying to correct their false ideas and hardened feelings toward “sinners”?
 - ? In limiting himself to just one lost sheep, what is Jesus telling you about lost sheep and his feelings for them?
3. Upon finding the lost sheep, the shepherd “layeth it on his shoulders” and, presumably, carried in back home.
 - ? What does it signify—about the shepherd and about the sheep—that the shepherd carried the sheep home?
 - ? Why not lead the walking sheep back?
 - ? How do you feel about Jesus’ apparent sense that sin so weakens and confuses the sinner that they can do very little to aid in their recovery, leaving Jesus to bear the hardest work of rescue?
 4. Upon returning home with the rescued sheep, the shepherd “calleth together his friends and

neighbours, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me.'"

- ? What is the significance of this part of the parable?
- ? How does it address and encourage change in the religious leaders' who challenged Jesus and possessed such distaste for the sinners and publicans with whom Jesus sits down to eat?
- ? What can you do to be responsive to sinners and their need for rescue in such a way as to be true to Jesus' parable?