

READ Luke 15:1-7

What – Jesus often taught in parables to make stronger points and so that the people would have word pictures to help them understand His teaching. Many of His parables involved farming, fishing, or other very practical examples from everyday life so that the people could connect Jesus’ teaching to everyday life. In this parable, Jesus used the example of a shepherd and his sheep to illustrate how valuable people are to God. God is searching after us because we have wandered away from His protective and providing hand. And there will be great joy, just as with a real shepherd, when a lost sheep is found.

Why – The real importance of this scripture lies in Jesus revealing the character of God. The Jews thought they were “the chosen” people. Jesus clearly stated here that God is looking for all His lost sheep. His goal is not just for the Jews, but for all those who have wandered away. Many of Jesus’ parables reveal an important character trait of our heavenly father. This one spoke to His singular purpose of restoring man to a relationship with Him. That is why He sent His Son (see John 3:16-17). The religious leaders of the day did not understand the character of God, so how could they lead the people into a knowledge or even a proper worship of the Almighty? Jesus’ choice of shepherds and sheep would have especially hit home with the poor who saw the immense value in one sheep. You are more valuable even than that to God!

WOW – Jesus choice of the shepherd/sheep motif was even more powerful, however, to the religious leaders. Shepherds were not well thought of. They were smelly, lonely outcasts who did not fit in well with society. Jesus represented God as the shepherd in this story. His message to the Pharisees was that God had more in common with a shepherd than with them. OUCH. Jesus was only following in His Fathers footsteps in the use of this metaphor. David was a shepherd, remember? His dad and Samuel nearly overlooked him when God wanted to anoint him king (see 1 Sam 16). God gave the initial message of Jesus birth to shepherds (see Luke 2:8-20). How insulting to the Pharisees! The truth is, God has more in common with the lowly and the humble than with the proud; even the religious proud! But I believe the biggest WOW in this scripture is the “JOY” in heaven. God said, “Rejoice with me” and Jesus said there will be much rejoicing in heaven over sinners who repent. Why all this joy? Because you are God’s purpose. He is so great, but also so personal. He loves YOU that much. What a thought to think; our repentance, our turning toward God causes Him JOY. It never ceases to amaze me how much He loves us. His sole purpose in this world is to show the world His love and fix what we destroyed (see Gen 2-3), our right relationship with Him.