

**Text:** Matthew 18:12-14

**Title:** Rejoicing over the Lost Being Found

**Truth:** God does not permit any of His believers to be lost.

**Date/Location:** Sunday May 15, 2022 at FBC

## Introduction

It is not a good idea to cause a believer to fall into sin because a severe judgment awaits those who do so (18:6). Nor is it a good idea to despise Christian believers because angels stand at the ready for God's command to assist those ones who are dear in God's sight (18:10, about Israel, Isaiah 43:2-5).

Verse 11 reminds us that the purpose of the Lord's coming was to save the lost (See Luke 19:10). Messing with what the Lord is saving = a very bad idea.

On the other side of the ledger, the Great Shepherd watches over His sheep with tremendous care. Let's think about that idea.

### I. Illustration: Shepherd's Care for His Sheep, v. 12

A. Imagine if you will that you have 100 sheep. What must that be like? Have you worked in animal husbandry before? Have you studied it? Have you watched any videos about it? In this task, you are charged to lead the sheep, provide food and water for them, mend them if they are injured, protect them from wolves or lions, keep them safe in bad weather, build fencing for them if that is required, shear them at least once a year,<sup>1</sup> and help them if they get in trouble bearing young. And you must know how to do all of that. That is a job. And if you do not do it properly, you could lose your job, if you are a hireling; or your livelihood if you are the owner and depend on them for wool or meat (mutton or lamb).

B. Now imagine that you have a fold of sheep penned in and safe, but as you bring them in, you realize one has strayed off and is now missing. You cannot put out an Amber alert for it. It is completely reasonable for the shepherd to go out and hunt down the one that has disappeared. "Does he not leave the 99 and go to the

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<sup>1</sup> See the following *sheep interest* story: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris\\_\(sheep\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_(sheep))  
All Scripture is from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

mountains...” is a rhetorical question for which Jesus expects a “Yes, obviously he will go and find it!” The others are cared for, and this one is important. He will not just let it go.

C. Is *one* sheep worth it?

1. If you say, “Well, it’s only 1% of the flock, that’s not much of a loss,” you are exhibiting not only laziness, but lack of care for the sheep as a flock and as individuals. That one sheep in the illustration represents one real-life father, mother, sister, brother, child, grandparent, or dear friend of some of the other sheep.
2. Not only is that an important person to the others, but that one sheep pictures a person who has a very *long* eternal life. Investment in that one sheep times an eternity of time makes a great deal of difference to *that* sheep as well as to eternity.

D. Now, imagine with the divine story-teller that you are the one who has the mission to go find this sheep. What will you do? Do you retrace the meandering path you may have taken since the lost ewe or ram or lamb was last seen? Does this sheep have a favorite hang-out that you know about? Was it injured and in a ditch on the side of the road? Has it resorted to the mountains—which is the suggestion in Jesus’s illustration? Perhaps there it thinks it can find protection from natural hazards and predators. Think of the efforts you will take, the boot leather you will wear out, the weariness that may set in, the frustration of the sheep being disobedient or dumb, and so on. And then you may have to carry it back because it will be too long and too slow to walk it back.

## II. Illustration: Shepherd’s Joy over His Sheep, v. 13

A. It is not a forgone conclusion that a shepherd will find his sheep. But it *is* a foregone conclusion that God will find *His* sheep, speaking of His children. But let us suppose with Jesus’s illustration that the sheep is found.

We can use our imagination yet again to think about what it would be like to lay eyes upon the sheep that took you out on such a journey to find it. It might be like (not the same as!) finding a lost child in the store or out in the neighborhood.

- B. Relief and rejoicing would be two prominent emotions of the sheep-keeper, just like the parent who found their lost child. His rejoicing is comparatively more for the lost sheep than for the other 99. Nothing bad had happened to them; they had not left the fold. The higher level of rejoicing is no slight against the 99. Consider the parable of the prodigal. The father rejoiced a good deal about the lost son who was found and threw a big party for his return. The older son who had stayed home took offense at this (Luke 15:28-32). But it is natural and right to be happy when a lost thing is found (Luke 15:4-7, 8-10).
- C. Considering the human application of this illustration, each one of the 99 were initially found in the same way as the lost one. Even after they were initially found, some of them (us—maybe most) strayed in some major way through their lifespan, and had to be re-found, in a sense. Not in the sense that they (we) lost salvation, but in the sense that they had lost their sense of direction and they needed the guidance of their Shepherd.

### **III. The Point: None of God’s Sheep Will Be Lost, v. 14**

- A. Remember this: what are the “little ones” we are talking about? The chapter started with Jesus talking about children-in-age as an illustration of believers-like-children. He shifted exclusively to believers-like-children in 18:6, and carried that through verse 10, and now into verse 14. He is talking about Christian people.
- B. People get concerned that the Lord mentions these little ones *perishing*. They go down the road of thinking about what it means to perish—does it mean to lose salvation (Arminianism)? Or does it mean spiritual devastation (MacArthur’s study Bible note)?
- C. But read the verse carefully. Here is my translation: “In the same way as the shepherd goes to find just one sheep even though he has 99 in hand, it is NOT the will of God in heaven that one of these believers be destroyed.” Whatever perish means—to be ruined, destroyed, or to perish—it is NOT going to happen. No one can snatch them out of the Father’s hand, nor the Son’s hand for that matter (John 10:28-29).

D. I read the “will of God” here as the “decreed will of God,” not the “moral desire of God.” You know—God’s will is for our sanctification. That does not always happen, but it is God’s moral desire. There is another category of God’s will, and those things will be or will not be, without question, because God has decreed them so.

## **Conclusion**

If the Lord cares for His sheep like this, it is not possible that they will perish. Nor will it go well for people who try to give them a hard time.

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