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Luke

Chapter 15 - The Unimaginable Worth of One

One Outside of 100 (vs. 1-7)

Luke 15:1-7: Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” So He told them this parable, saying, “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

Scripture so ordains that certain things are written in specific orders. Luke in particular emphasizes that. He states that at the beginning of the book of the Gospel of Luke that these things have been written in consecutive order. We think of it in terms of a timeline, but he thinks of it in terms of emphasis. And so, as we go through the Book of Luke, we begin to see different events tying together with each other.

In Luke 14 that we had just been in, really, if you were to summarize it, it's about a meal. It's basically about the meals that the world has and the meal that Christ has. And we see that, of course, the meal of the world is always looking for opportunities and looking for ways in which they might exploit somebody through doing something seemingly altruistic or benevolent. Nevertheless, the meal of Christ is one that calls generously, whosoever will. Initially, He begins to explain that He invites some and they all begin to make excuses. And then He sends out His servant, and he goes in the highways and byways and invites everybody. He ends

with an interesting statement about salt, as we talked about last week. And as He ends with that statement about salt, He's basically saying, "If salt has lost its saltiness, it's useless. It's worthless." It is that uselessness and worthlessness that seems to ring in people's minds. In many respects, I think there are many people that feel useless and worthless. The question is what makes that happen and what makes somebody worthless or useless? The sinners and the publicans have come around now to Jesus and they're all ears. They want to know, "Are we the useless ones? Are we the ones that You've gone on the highways and byways and invited? Are we the ones?"

So, as you come to Chapter 15, we see them all coming together to listen. They are very receptive and very attuned to what Jesus is going to say next because these are the ones that are looking for hope. They're the ones that are looking for perhaps some facsimile of mercy and grace that would be stowed upon them. These are those that have probably messed up their lives and are now reaping the consequences of those decisions that they've made, and in many respects, probably feel like there's no

turning back and there's no way to erase it. Christ comes on this mission, and He goes, "You're invited too." And they're taken aback by that because they've always been, in a way, the outcast; especially with these that are the religious rulers.

And so, it starts off this way in Chapter 15,

(Luke 15:1) "Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him."

The tax gatherers- another way of putting it would be- traitors; treasonous individuals that are working for the Roman government, though they be Jews. So, they are helping take taxes for the enemy and not loved by any red-blooded Jew. They are hated and despised. And then, you have those that are called sinners. Now, we know that we're all sinners. There's no doubt about that, but what it's talking about is somebody that is seen as such. In other words, they have a reputation of either being immoral, or they have a reputation of doing something externally to the point where people go, "Okay, that's a really bad person." We all know that there are certain people that we put in those categories because of their

lifestyle. And quite frankly, their lifestyle, even in some way, perhaps delegates it that they do what they do. But these are ones that are fundamentally unfit; they are the most repulsive, and they're the ones that are seen as outcast. So, you have two kinds of outcasts, really- the traitor, the treasonous individual, and those by virtue of their immoral behavior or the things that they've done are kind of outcasts by that. They come near and Scripture is saying they're the ones listening to Jesus.

Now, on the other side of the fence you have, verse 2, the Pharisees and the scribes. Pharisee just simply means "separate ones". So, they perceive themselves as so righteous that you couldn't get close to them. And it was by virtue of their holiness. And fundamentally, they were ones that individuals that by reason of their ceremonial outward appearance would convey a sense of righteousness by their garb that they wore, broaden their phylacteries, Scripture would say. And as they would come close to you, you would go, "Wow." You know, it would almost be like the pope walking by and with all his garb. And you go, "That's got to be a really holy person."

You go, "Why, have you talked to him?" "No, I don't need to talk to him. Just watching him is telling me that he's a holy person." So, the Pharisees were such. And then, the scribes were, we could define them as lawyers. They were lawyers according to Scripture. They were lawyers according to righteous things. If you ever want to know a particular thing or a problem or an issue in the Bible, in the Old Testament in particular; if you had a question about any of these, they were the guys to ask because they were extremely fastidious in their going into Scripture and they knew exactly what it said. I mean, jot and tiddle; they knew exactly what it said. These were the experts in the Law. And so, if there was an argument, they fundamentally settled it because they knew what it said. Because of that, they were extremely oppressive because they were all about the detail. And if you didn't do according to the detail, then they would bring it up and they would say, "Here it is."

(Luke 15:2) "Both the Pharisees and the scribes began..."

They were very happy people.

"... began to grumble..."

Like my aunt always said, you know, "The Sadducees are terrible people and they're not very happy because they're sad-you-see." But it's one way to remember them anyway.

"Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying..."

The Pharisees and the scribes, they begin grumbling, saying, it's an interesting word, "grumbling," which seems to kind of give the automatopoetic phrase in it. It sounds a little bit like grumbling, but here they are grumbling. And in this passage, the reason why they're grumbling is this man receives sinners and He eats with them. They're eating at His table. They've been invited to dinner with Him. It's an interesting passage, once again, really tying in and connecting to Chapter 14, in which Jesus says, "We're going in the highways and byways, we're going to get anybody to come." And these are the ones that are listening. And so, as they begin to listen, then we hear the grumbling in the background of the Pharisees and the scribes, and it's an interesting setup; because we realize that all their lives, these publicans, these sinners, have

been looked down upon, they've been cast out, and they've been hated and despised.

We will ultimately come in the Book of Luke and see a guy by the name of Zacchaeus. And once again, only the Gospel of Luke will record that particular incident of Zacchaeus. So, all the kids have that wonderful song because of the Gospel of Luke. But it is a reminder that you have this chief, really, tax gatherer that really knows how to get and extract money out of people and has been doing this for quite a while but is looking for a way out. And he finally sees Jesus and has to climb in a tree to see Him, but finally sees Jesus. And Jesus says, "Today, I'm coming to your house, and we're going to eat together." I mean, what rabbi would ever consider eating with a tax collector? And how that literally changed his whole perspective, that he was forgiven. This is, I think, fundamentally what Romans 8 is all about. I mean, what changes us? And Romans 8:1 says, you know, the fact that we receive mercy... I mean, how could it be that God would literally forgive all of our sins and accept us the

way that we are? And so, we realize the wonderful grace of Christ.

As Paul will write in Titus 3, we were once people that hated. We went around hating one another. But the kindness of God appeared and His love for mankind. He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done, but according to His mercy. It's the mercy of God that really changes us. Paul will use this to the degree of Romans 12. He says, "It's the mercy of God that should compel you to present your body as a living sacrifice, for what He's done for you, the sacrifice that He's made for you." So, the fact that Jesus would in any way want to relate with them.

Now, all the way through the Gospel of Luke and even as we've gone through these 15 chapters, we realize that there are these ones that Scripture pulls out. And I remember the first time I actually started thinking about this, I was pretty young, and I go, "Wow." I mean, you would think that God would be talking in terms of masses of people, but most of the gospels focus on the one that He talks with. Though He'll minister to the multitudes, it's

the one that we hear the story of. And all the way through the Gospel of Luke, we begin to see the individualism as well as in particular the Gospel of John, as we see the love of Christ reaching out to individuals.

I mean, Luke starts off with one Elizabeth. She is an individual that perceived herself as disgraced because of her inability to have children. And yet the one, Elizabeth, will have the one son that will announce the Messiah to come.

You will have the one, Mary, who is fundamentally indigent and fundamentally insignificant, but she will be great among women. And she's just one.

It will just be the one Simeon that will be there. All his life he's waited and perhaps perceives himself as forgotten because all of his life, he's been looking for the Messiah. But Simeon will be recorded as the one who actually holds the Christ child, sees the Christ child, witnesses the Christ child.

As Anna, the one widow, that is in some ways abandoned because she lost her husband at a very early age, and

because of that she is forsaken, but the one Anna is remembered.

You have a centurion. He's just the one centurion. He's a combatant. He's an enemy. And yet he's the one that Christ says, "I'm not seeing any greater faith than in this guy." And he's not even a Jew. But he's just one guy. I mean, all the way through you have the street walker, you know, the lady from the street. She comes into the house where Jesus is and she begins to wipe His feet with her hair.

It's just a story of this one woman, Mary and Martha, just Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus.

The individualism that we see throughout Scripture, and Jesus will even tell stories of the one good Samaritan, the one that stayed behind, or there were 10 lepers, Luke will say, that were healed. One came back. And to me, it's just the power of that all the way through. We think of not only just the one, but these are the ones that have been despised. The tax gatherer, Levi, Jesus goes into his office. I mean, why would He go into this one man's office? There's a whole bunch of offices, a whole bunch of stores,

a whole bunch of places to go. He goes into this one tax collector's office, and he finds a guy, which we know as Matthew. And He says, "You're coming with me." Just this one. Peter, just the one, will leave his nets. And we have these interesting dialogues that'll come at the end where we have this one on the cross next to Jesus. And, I mean, how many lives have been touched by these individuals that God has recorded for all eternity that we remember them? We think in terms of masses. We think in terms of great numbers and the significance of those. God goes, "I don't work through great masses. I work through one." And so, this is what this story is about. This narrative as He begins to tell a parable which fundamentally is a similitude or a comparison of sorts that He gives to convey a moral lesson. A parable just means literally to put something alongside of something else. And it's for the purpose of helping us understand what God is like, how He sees things, and what truth is.

So, we pick up in the passage in verse 3, and as Jesus is hearing the grumbling, He understands two things. One is, He has these grumblers that are here. They're

undermining His mission, really. And then He has those that He longs to see forgiven, and those that are perceiving themselves as outcasts, as insignificant. So, how do you relieve them of this burden and show them that they're loved without turning to them, and saying something like, "I know you feel stupid, insignificant, and really, you feel like you've blown it, right?" How do you encourage them without saying that? And what you do is you give them a parable.

And so, it says in verse 3,

(Luke 15:3) "So He told them this parable..."

First question you have to ask is, who's "them"? Is "them" the Pharisees or is "them" the tax collectors? And I would say they're both. He's talking to them both. This parable is going to fit them both, and it's going to convict the one, and it's going to give relief to the other.

And so, as you look in verse 3,

"So He told them this parable, saying,

(Luke 15:4) “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the

ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?"

Almost immediately in the parable, one becomes the focus. Why would one be important? I mean, you have 99 others, why even bother with the one? He appeals not only to the tax collectors that obviously were in the business of making money and sinners probably had used it themselves, but also the Pharisees, which Luke will go on to say were lovers of money. So, the point of the passage will be that He's drawing them in by virtue of what they value. Now, what's interesting with this whole sheep/shepherd thing is that there is a combination of value within the understanding. And the combination is that it will tug at the monetary in the sense of you lost the sheep, you're going to lose the money here. And the other will be: You've grown attached to the sheep. I mean, even Pharisees will grow attached to their own. In fact, that's why Jesus will continue to give examples like, "You have an ox that fell in the well or fell in the ditch. Aren't you going to try to get them out even if it's a Sabbath?" Why would He use that? Well, they need the

ox for the labor, but they also have that which is part of the household and part of the family. And probably the kids as well, you know, they get attached to the things that they possess. So, if you were a good shepherd, you actually had to care for your sheep. You actually had to care for your sheep, and there was going to be involvement in that, and that means that you would grow in some way attached. So, what Jesus is doing is He's appealing not only to their monetary sense of value, but He's appealing to their humane sense of value. Even wicked people like dogs, some, or cats or whatever. So, the point of the matter is, He tells this parable that would draw them in.

He then goes on, and He says,

"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost..."

You might continue to focus on the word "lost," too. That's going to be mentioned twice in verse 4.

In verse 6, "lost" is going to be mentioned again.

Verse 8, we're going to be talking about later next week.

(Luke 15:8) “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one..."

That's just one.

And then, in verse 9, she rejoices because she had found the one she lost.

And then, interestingly enough, if you drop on down, when He begins to tell a story of the prodigal son, which was lost... You would say, "Well, He doesn't use the word 'lost'." He actually does.

In fact, if you drop on down to verse 17, where He talks about the prodigal son, He says,

(Luke 15:17) "But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!"

The word "dying" is "lost". The same word. And of course, we're going to see at the end of that particular story that he was once lost, but now he's found. "My son was once lost, but now he's found." So, this is going to be a narrative about one. It's going to be a narrative about

lost. And it's going to be a wonderful message about being found. And it's the grace of God.

(Luke 15:4) "What man among you..."

So, He's stirred up maybe thoughts of getting them on the same page.

And then, He says this in verse 5,

(Luke 15:5) "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing."

In other words, there's a celebration. There's a sense of affection that's given. I mean, when you're placing something on your shoulders, it's not just to relieve the sheep from walking, but it is also a sense of rejoicing and a sense of compassion, a sense of involvement with that sheep. It's interesting, a number of years ago, and some of you probably remember, I think it was our youngest, we'd gone to the beach and it was a church function. It was a pretty crowded day. There were a lot of people on the beach. So, Connie turned to me, and she goes, "So, where's our son?" And I said, "He's with you." She goes, "He's not with me." Now, he was, I think, 3, 4 or

something like that. And it was crowded, crowded, crowded day. And I said, "I sure thought he was with you." She goes, "Well, maybe he's with somebody in the church." So, we asked everybody in the church. They didn't know where he was. And my first thought is, "Boy, I'm going to... When I get a hold of him..." That was actually my first thought. My second thought was, "What are we going to do? How are we going to get him?" And then you go into panic mode, "He's drowning." You know, you think of all those kind of things. And my wife, I don't think I've ever seen my wife more panicked than that particular day. But we were searching all up and down the beach. We had gone one way, a long distance. I don't remember exactly how we ended up finding him, but he was found. And I can tell you, I didn't lay a hand on him except to hug him. And I think what Christ is giving is the picture of the joy that comes from one that was lost that is found. And what He wants you to understand is that He's not mad at you for wandering away. He's just rejoicing over finding you. And sometimes, we get Him confused because He has every right to be upset at us.

When you consider the whole idea of sheep, and sheep is probably one of the greatest examples when you consider, in many respects, they're perceived as dumb. Actually, Scripture calls them dumb in one particular passage. I think it has more to do with the fact that they're silent than dumb, not speaking. But they're dumb in the sense that they're defenseless; they're needy; they really can't protect themselves. And left to themselves, they're going to die because they continue to grow their fur (wool). They actually have to be sheared. They're one of the few animals that have to be cared for in order to survive. Because if they're not sheared, there are all kinds of diseases that begin to grow in there. They get wet and then it gets too heavy. Then, they are not able to move themselves. They fall over, they cannot pick themselves back up. But beyond that, there's all kinds of diseases that come in if the wool is allowed to continue to grow. So, they have to be sheared; they have to be cared for. Not to mention the fact that they're defenseless if a wolf comes or something like that. I mean, what's the sheep going to do? How can he protect himself? He clearly is not going to outrun him and has everything against him. So, you have

problems of overheating, exhaustion, infection, physical problems. And the interesting thing is that sheep are prone to wander, too. Now, unlike goats, they're more to follow with the group, but all they have to do is have something take them off course.

Now, what I was interested in is, what would cause a sheep to wonder? Why would this one leave the fold? Why would he leave the group in the open pastures? And I found three particular reasons. The first reason is that they're unwell. Sheep, in fact, if they're not feeling well or if they're weak or in some way have physical pain... They actually say they have arthritis. I didn't know they had arthritis, so I feel more empathy towards the sheep. But physical pain or any kind of suffering that they might have, which would cause them to just not be able to keep up, so they find a place of rest. And you go, "Where did that sheep go?" It was in pain. It couldn't make it. It was overwhelmed by the pain and sorrow that it had. And the second reason is that they call it tunnel vision. That is to say that they're lured away by greener grass. Who doesn't think that the grass is greener on the other side? I mean,

it's just our nature to think that. It's the way that we go. But the third reason is very interesting to me and probably the most interesting, and that is that if a sheep has a faulty leader. They are prone to lead in some cases other groups or other things or other people. And if in fact one comes and begins to call them away, they might have a tendency to go. And if they do, and this would be a wandering sheep more specifically, not one that had been "faithful," so to speak, but this is one that says, "Maybe I'll try this guy out." And so, then, they go. And in that respect, those faulty leaders lead them astray, and they lead them in places. Well, what's interesting about the passage is, it's very clear that the Pharisees and scribes who were religious leaders, they were the ones that were supposed to be the shepherds. Jeremiah talks over and over again, and he says, "You've been lousy shepherds. You've destroyed the sheep. You've taken advantage of the sheep. And you wonder why sheep are lost?" Jesus looks over the multitudes, and He says, "They look like sheep without a shepherd." And the point of it is, these are people that are hurting. These are people that have gone after other things. And these are people that have

been led astray by other people. They're sheep without a shepherd. And He began to feel compassion for them.

Now, as we read the passage, it's just the one. And the reason why it's just the one is that God is wanting us to know to what degree He would come to save one. We all wrestle with the fact that, "Does God care for me? Is He even interested in the pain and suffering?" Jesus will say in Matthew 11, "Come to Me," listen to the phrase, "all who are weary and heavy laden." That would be a sheep full of fur (wool) that couldn't move; it was wet and had all kinds of disease. And He says, "I know you've been abandoned. I know you've been misled. And I know some of it is your own fault. You went after things that were greener. But I've been looking for you." And you go, "Yeah, but I'm just one." He would never leave the 99. Scriptures letting us know. He's coming after you. That whole John 10 has always been, I think, encouraging to all of us. I mean, you read Psalm 23, and of course, "The Lord is my shepherd." And that's one reason why it's so endearing to us. But you come into John 10, you go, "That's Jesus." Jesus is Psalm 23. He's the Shepherd. As He

says, "I'm the Good Shepherd." We go, "Who is that good shepherd in Psalm 23?" Jesus goes in John 10, "It's me. I'm the One. And if you hear My voice, come." And then, He even goes on, He says, "And I have other sheep that aren't of this fold, I've got to go get them." And it's telling me that He's looking for those.

Now, the question is, who is this one? And what's clear is this is one that has wandered away. And he has issues, and he has problems, and they're irreversible. Sheep can't save themselves. They just can't. They're just unable to do that. But He's coming and He's coming to get them.

(Luke 15:6) "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'"

One of our most endearing passages is Romans 5:6 says, "For while we were still helpless..." He uses the word "helpless". He saved us. We couldn't do anything. And the wonderful thing about this passage is it's all Him. I mean, the sheep can't say, "You know, I think I did pretty good letting Him know where I was." Nobody knows where he is. The sheep is probably at the end of his rope, and as

Paul would even say, "He had the sentence of death within himself. Probably gave up all hope." But God says, "I haven't forgotten you." There's 99. There are so many people, and here again, Christ is involved with the masses of people that are surrounding Him and just longing to even touch Him. And they're just clamoring on Him and pushing and shoving. Can you just imagine all the work? And there Jesus is, and He goes, "Who touched Me?" And the disciples go, "What do you mean who touched You?" And He goes, "Someone touched Me." And they go, "Everybody touched You." He said, "No, somebody touched Me." And He turns to the one woman that had been ill for 12 years. He goes, "We're going to heal you today." One.

You don't think you're important? God does. And the gospel of Luke is going to go, "You have unimaginable value to God. You just can't imagine." You go, "Well, how important am I?" He says, "You want to know what makes heaven celebrate?" I have often wondered, I mean, we all have in some ways, "What is heaven like? What do they do for fun?" And can you imagine everybody just going,

"You mean somebody else is found?" We're not talking about 5,000, 5 million people. We're talking about 1. "Oh yeah, I mean, we're jumping. We're jumping." I mean, there is a great excitement in heaven, and of course, as Jesus will make mention of this, I was looking at the different passages of why heaven would celebrate, and there are actually two others that make reference to the celebration of heaven that I just want to make note of. And one of them is when a servant does a good job.

Scripture says in Matthew 25:21 that in that day God will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant". Now, listen to the phrase, "enter into the joy of your master." There's happiness there. What makes God happy? Why is He celebrating? God goes, "I have something to celebrate. A servant was faithful." The celebration in heaven is a lot different than what people celebrate here. But God sees faithfulness and I can just imagine. And if you think about it, it's the faithfulness of what? A servant. Now, we're not talking about a dignitary. We're not talking about somebody great. We're not talking about someone popular. We're not talking about prestige. We're talking

about a servant. And that one servant was faithful. Heaven's celebrating. That's a big, big deal in heaven.

And then I was looking at another passage found in Luke 6, and it says this,

(Luke 6:22) “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

(Luke 6:23) Be glad in that day and leap for joy..."

So, there's some leaping in heaven. And there's jumping up and down, and what are they excited about? You and I were counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. And they stayed true to the name. They didn't deny the name. And they were willing to suffer for the sake of Christ. The one was willing to hold firm. My anchor holds, right?

(Luke 15:6) "... ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’"

Now, I just want to emphasize the word "lost" here, which, once again, we see twice in verse 4 and verse 6. We're going to see it in verse 9 as well. We see it in verse 17. You're going to see it in verse 24 and verse 32. And

really, when Jesus uses this particular word in Luke 17, I think it's verse 27 and 29, it won't be defined as "lost"; it'll be defined as "destroyed". So, He'll talk about Sodom and Gomorrah, and He'll use this word. It's actually where the word "Apollo" came from. So, do you remember that spaceship that we sent up? I was telling Connie, I said, "Look at all the names of the spaceships. They're all other gods. Every one of them that we're sending up." But anyway, it ought to tell us something. Your gods, you have to put rockets on them to move them. Our God comes all by Himself. But anyway, a flood (Luke 17:27) and the other was with Sodom and Gomorrah in (Luke) 17:29.

But Jesus will state in Luke 19:10, which is really what this passage is about, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." The fundamental point of the word "*apollymi*" is fundamentally that you're dealing with a word that is dealing with ruin. And you're dealing with something that's perishing, something that's destroyed and literally destined for the fire. To put it another way, as you come to the end of Chapter 14, useless. When we go our own way, our life becomes

useless and we become useless. All we like sheep have gone astray. We've each gone our own way. But the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. But the wonderful thing about this is though we are useless, God can make us useful again. And God alone will save us. And the passage is making reference to the power of God to save us and the necessity for us to, I would say, be like sheep in the sense of the one thing that sheep do really well is they can be distressed, downcast, and impotent. They do that really well. They can't take care of themselves. And God says, "Let Me do this, you surrender all, and I'll come to you."

(Luke 15:7) “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents..."

And just to emphasize the word, repenting is the changing of your way of thinking. It literally is the mind seeing things differently. Where the sheep at one time goes, "You know what? Forget about green grass. I'm sticking with this guy." And it is that sense of just literally changing your way of thinking.

"... one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons..."

I just want you to underline this. Now, Scripture's not calling them righteous. It's in the dative. Scripture's saying that they're calling themselves righteous. So, when He's making reference to this, you've got 99 that perceive themselves to be righteous, and this is really the analogy.

In fact, you go back into Chapter 18, as you turn through the Gospel of Luke, he tells another parable, and in many ways, it is parallel to this text.

But it reads this way in Luke 18,

(Luke 18:9) "And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt."

It goes on and talks about the Pharisees who's praying to himself, and he thanked God that he wasn't a sinner like this publican was. So, you have this interesting thing going on, and God goes, "The thing that makes this one so valuable is this one saw himself as hopeless and helpless. He saw himself as unable to save himself." Where you

have 99, and they go, "No need to save us." And therefore, if you look at the end of the passage, they have no need for repentance. You go to some people, and you go, "You know you need to repent." They go, "Of what? What do I need to do? I'm a pretty good person." "How do you know you're a good person?" "I've got money." I don't know why they think they're good. "I'm successful in business" or "I have a degree" or something like that. So, their perception is that they're grand and glorious because of something that they do. Why do they need to change their way of thinking? Everything's going fine, at least according to their standards on this particular day. So, they don't need to repent. God says, "I'm not looking for you." This is what makes the text interesting. "I'm not looking for you. I'm looking for the one that says he's helpless. I'm looking for the one that's crying out."

If you remember the passage, and let me give it to you again, it's Luke 19:10, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save..." Not the 99, but the one that's lost. The one that saw his condition as one in ruin; the one that saw his condition as one that was perishing; the one that would

admit... This word "lost" is also used in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that you should not be lost, perish, but have everlasting life." It's God's grace that would save us, and it's His love for us that would do this.

I was thinking of how the Pharisees towards the end would say, "Isn't it appropriate for one to die for all of us? Let's get rid of this Jesus. He's ruining everything. Isn't it best that one would die for all?" Of course, he was giving prophecy. He didn't know what he was saying in the terms of the way it was going to be fulfilled. But that's an interesting picture of man perceiving the valuelessness of one. "Let's let one." And quite frankly, if you were in a boat that was sinking and one out of the boat would save everybody else, what would you do? I mean, the thought is the one is not that important compared to the group. But God says the one is important. And let me just say this, especially if the one is God. And it was that “One” that saved the world. It was His One that died for us. And it was His power, His grace.

I want to end with a passage in the Old Testament, Psalm 22, if I could, which gives a wonderful picture of our Savior. Of course, Isaiah 53, "All we like sheep have gone astray. He's laid on Him the iniquity of us all and He was bruised for our transgressions." I mean, what did it take to save us. What would a shepherd do to save us? Jesus would turn to His Father, and He goes, "I know You love Me because I lay down My life for the sheep." And we realize just the greatness of God's love.

But in Psalm 22, if you look with me; look at how the chapter starts off. Let's see if it sounds familiar.

(Psalm 22:1) "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? ..."

This is the one crying out.

"... Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.

(Psalm 22:2) O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest.

(Psalm 22:3) Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

(Psalm 22:4) In You our fathers trusted; They trusted and You delivered them.

(Psalm 22:5) To You they cried out and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

(Psalm 22:6) But I am a worm..."

"I'm a nobody." I mean, if there's one thing that this passage says, it's that there's no such thing as nobodies in heaven. God loves you. And if it's just one, He'll move heaven and earth to save you. In order to get Mary and Joseph down to Bethlehem, He taxes the whole world.

"But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people.

(Psalm 22:7) All who see me sneer at me..."

"They say I'm worthless, and they say I'm a discard, and they say 'Good riddance.'" And don't you think that the tax collectors and the sinners felt that way?

They say,

(Psalm 22:8) “Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him..."

"I mean, He really loves you, right?" As they're laughing. Because why would He love a sinner? God's holy. But now, we realize that the One talking is the One on the cross that became sin for us and became the One that was despised.

(Psalm 22:11) "Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help.

(Psalm 22:12) Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.

(Psalm 22:13) They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion.

(Psalm 22:14) I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me.

(Psalm 22:15) My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death.

(Psalm 22:16) For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet.

(Psalm 22:17) I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me;

(Psalm 22:18) They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots."

Just the One, right? Just the One. You're important to God. God's concerned for the one. He loves you. God's going to go through a lot of trouble to save you because He's saying you're worth it. And if there's anything to celebrate in heaven, it's you, that one, repenting.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we're so thankful for Your love for us. It doesn't wane; it just grows stronger. And the longer You search, the more intensely You search. For it is Your love that is compelling You to suffer, to bleed, to die, to save the sheep.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, perhaps you thought all along that God didn't think you were important. Perhaps you were buying in to what religious people were saying about you. "You're just a sinner.

You're just a treacherous, treasonous individual. Who would even care for you? You've made too many mistakes. You've done too much wrong. You're a worthless soul." Oh, no. Not to God, not to the Shepherd. You're a wandering sheep that's been hurt. You're a wandering sheep that's had pain, suffering. You're a wandering sheep that's been misled, and you're a wandering sheep that has looked for greener grass. But now, you've come upon disappointment and sorrow and distress. And about all you can say is "help". He's coming. Simply come before Him today, and say, "Save me. Forgive me of my sins." This is why Jesus died on the cross, that you wouldn't have to pay for them, but that He would. How could it be that a Shepherd would love you that much? I don't understand it either.