



# STORY TIME

Discovering the Parables of Jesus



# 39 Parables of Jesus

PARABLE/LESSON	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Wheat and tares	13:24-30		
Barren fig tree			13:6-9
Children in market	11:16-19		7:31-35
Budding Fig Tree	24:32-36	13:28-32	21:29-33
Lamp under basket	5:14-16	4:21-23	8:16-18
Dinner guests			14:15-24
Divided Kingdom	12:24-30	3:22-27	11:14-23
Faithful servants			12:35-40
Feast invitations			14:12-14
Friend at midnight			11:5-13
Good Samaritan ✓			10:25-37
Great physician	9:10-13	2:15-17	5:29-32
Groom's attendants	9:14-15	2:18-20	5:33-35
Growing seed		4:26-29	
Hidden treasure	13:44		
Humbled guest			14:7-11
King's war plans			14:31-32
Laborers in vineyard ✓	20:1-16		
Leaven	13:33		13:20-21
Lost coin			15:8-10
Lost sheep			15:4-7

PARABLE/LESSON	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Marriage feast	22:1-14		
Mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
Net of fish	13:47-50		
New cloth	9:16	2:21	5:36
New wine	9:17	2:22	5:37-39
Pearl of great price	13:45-46		
Persistent widow			18:1-8
Sower ✓	13:3-23		
Rich man			12:13-21
Talents ✓	25:14-30		
Minas			19:11-27
Prodigal son ✓			15:11-32
Steward and rich man			16:1-8
Ten virgins	25:1-12		
Great Supper			14:15-24
Two sons	21:28-31		
Merciless servant in debt with his master ✓	18:23-35		
Wicked Vinedressers	21:33-46	12:1-11	12:35-48

# Context for understanding today's Parable

Shepherding was a common occupation in the agricultural ancient world. This was particularly the case throughout the history of Israel. Some of the Jews' greatest ancestors were shepherds: Abraham (Genesis 13:2); Israel (also called Jacob) (Genesis 48:15); Moses (Exodus 3:1); and King David (1 Samuel 16:11). Shepherds took care of sheep by protecting them from wild animals, and by moving them from pasture to pasture where there was food and water for them. Shepherds made a profit by selling the sheep's wool to make clothing, blankets, and other goods.



- Sheep are the most precious and valuable assets a shepherd has; therefore, a good shepherd treats them as a treasure.
- Sheep need leadership. Without it, they wander off and are injured or killed. Isaiah explains that we “all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way” (Isaiah 53:6). This was just as true in Isaiah’s time, 700 years before the birth of Yeshua, as it is now.
- In the period Jesus was born the shopkeeper and doctor had been raised up in social status while the religious leaders despised and mistrusted shepherds, officially condemning them as “sinners.”

# The Bible often describes the Heavenly Father as a Shepherd

Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His  
arm He will gather the lambs and carry them  
in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing  
ewes. Isaiah 40:11

For thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I Myself will search for **My sheep** and seek them out. As a **shepherd** cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered **sheep**, so **I will care for My sheep** and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. **I will feed My flock** and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord God.

Ezekiel 34:11-15



# The Heavenly Shepherd

Psalm 23

The Lord  
is my  
shepherd,  
I shall  
not want.

**Psalm 23:1**



רָעָה ra'ah Hebrew verb “to tend, pasture, to shepherd”

רֹעִי roi Hebrew noun “my shepherd, my watcher”



He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside quiet waters. **Psalms 23:2**





He restores  
my soul; He  
guides me in  
the paths of  
righteousness  
for His name's  
sake.

Psalm 23:3





Even though I  
walk through  
the valley of the  
shadow of  
death, I fear no  
evil, for You are  
with me;

Psalm 23:4a





Your rod  
and Your  
staff, they  
comfort  
me.

Psalm 23:4b





You prepare a  
table before  
me in the  
presence of  
my enemies;  
Psalm 23:5a



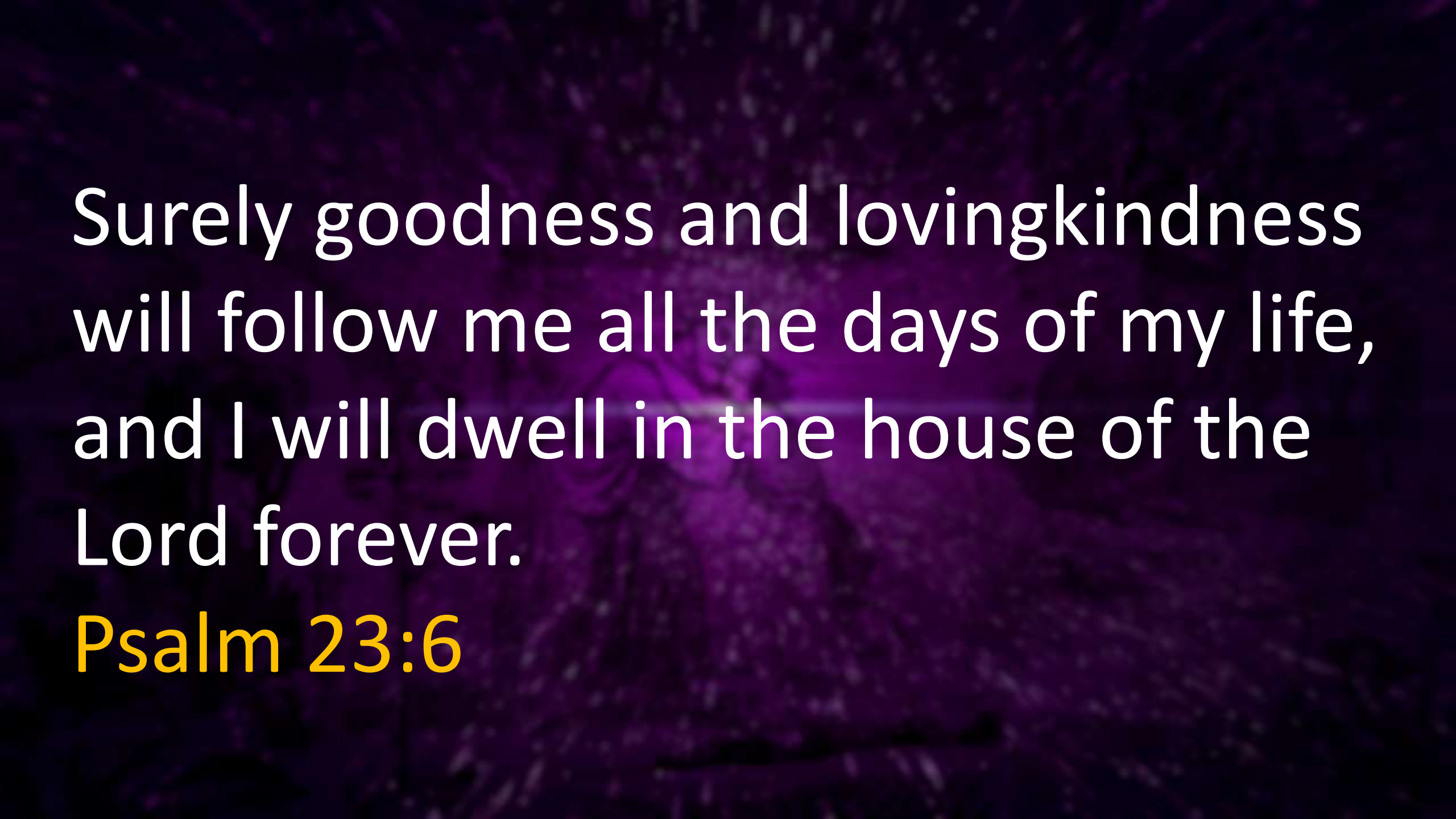


You have  
anointed my  
head with oil;  
My cup  
overflows.

**Psalm 23:5b**







Surely goodness and lovingkindness  
will follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the  
Lord forever.

Psalm 23:6

- Psalm 23:6 promises eternal life for the sheep (followers/disciples) of Messiah Jesus, the Great Shepherd

- How do I find the way to eternal life?

Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” John 10:27-28

- How is that eternal life provided?

By the sacrificial death of Jesus and His resurrection



A faint, artistic background image of a shepherd in a field, wearing a hat and holding a staff, with a dog and sheep visible. The image is rendered in a dark, monochromatic style with a purple tint.

# Parable of the Lost Sheep

Luke 15

Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him [Jesus] to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Luke 15:1-2



[On a different occasion] As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick." Matthew 9:9-12

- In Jesus' day, rabbis and other spiritual leaders enjoyed widespread respect and were held in high esteem in Jewish society. Almost everyone looked up to the Pharisees. They were strict adherents to the Law, they were the guardians of tradition, and they were the exemplars of piety. In their vaulted position, they avoided those whom they deemed "sinners"—those who did not follow their system of rules. Pharisees and the other religious class of Jesus' day would definitely not have socialized with tax collectors, who were infamous for embezzlement and their cooperation with the hated Romans.
- Jesus chose to eat with sinners because they needed to know that repentance and forgiveness were available. As Jesus' ministry grew, so did His popularity among the social outcasts of society. Once Matthew was part of His inner circle, Jesus naturally had more contact with the pariahs of His society. Spending time with the tax collectors and sinners was only natural, since He had "not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). If Jesus was to reach the lost, He must have some contact with them.



So He [Jesus] told them this  
**parable** [Greek noun παραβολή  
*parabole*] , saying,  
Luke 15:3

# Why did Yeshua teach in parables?

1. A parable is a short story that's easy to understand. It's used to explain things that are harder to understand, especially spiritual truths.
2. Parables are interesting.
3. They're easy to remember.
4. Messiah Jesus taught in parables to make the truth clear to those who were willing to hear and obscure to those who lacked genuine spiritual interest.



“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep [Greek noun πρόβατον *probaton*] and has lost one of them, does not leave [Greek verb καταλείπω *kataleipo*] the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?” Luke 15:4

- One out of a hundred is easy to overlook, but as soon as the owner recognizes his loss, he takes whatever steps are needed in order to bring the group to wholeness. Even a missing 1 percent must be noticed... Before the search can begin, we need to notice what, or who, is not there. That missing one out of one hundred is as important to him as all the others.

– Amy-Jill Levine



The shepherd had a flock of one hundred sheep. He led his flock to a pasture where the sheep were safe and had plenty of grass to eat and water to drink. As he counted his flock, he noticed that there are only ninety-nine. One of his sheep is missing and lost. Because the flock is safe and provided for, the shepherd leaves them in the open pasture and goes after the one which is lost. He likely retraced his path while searching for his lost sheep until he finds it.

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-15/luke-153-7/>

There is no reason to be concerned about the 99 sheep who are not lost. The sheep we worry about is the one who is lost, and who will die if not found.

<https://www.messiah-of-god.com/parable-of-the-lost-sheep.html>



In an agrarian society, where wealth is often determined by the amount of livestock and land a person owns, sheep would be considered very valuable. Those who owned sheep would have a shepherd take care of them.

A shepherd's job is to protect their employer's sheep from being stolen, eaten, or lost. Losing livestock would be like burning money. No shepherd wants to have to tell their boss that they lost one of the sheep. To protect the sheep, the shepherd lives with them in order to defend them from predators.

Generally, 99 sheep would be safe in the wilderness on their own for awhile because predators are more likely to attack an individual instead of a group of livestock. Predators like to have an easy meal, having a sense of risk versus reward. When predators do attack a group of livestock, they attempt to cause panic in order to separate one. Often, a shepherd can keep sheep safe by simply keeping them together, which means the 99 sheep would be fine on their own for awhile.

- The lost sheep is a sinner who lives in broken fellowship with God.
- The sheep as a whole represent Israelites, therefore the one lost sheep is a member of Israel. The sheep is lost, not because it does not belong to that flock or is not a part of Israel; it is lost because it is separated from the group it belongs to. The lost sheep is separated from and missing the blessings of being in the presence of the Shepherd and community with the flock. This is similar to how the sinners and tax collectors have broken relationship to God through their disobedience and are living out of fellowship with their religious community because of their sin. The lost sheep is isolated somewhere along the road, away from the cool streams and grass of the green pasture, just as the sinner is lost along the way and is not enjoying the blessings of living in harmony with God and His family.



Within the confines of Jesus's parable, the sheep represent members of the nation/family of Israel. The sheep are the Jewish people. And the man who goes looking for them is the shepherd. Jesus does not explicitly claim to be the shepherd in this version of the parable. But this is easily inferred from the context in which the parable is told. Jesus has been literally going around Judea and Galilee inviting sinners to repentance, just as the shepherd went in search of his lost sheep.

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-15/luke-153-7/>

Jesus said, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

Therefore thus says the Lord God of **Israel** concerning the shepherds who are tending **My people**: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the Lord. “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord. Jeremiah 23:3-4



Like a good shepherd, Jesus/Yeshua has persistently called out to His scattered sheep who have not yet come under His care and protection as their Messiah.

And even though He first came to the Jewish People as the Shepherd King of Israel, Yeshua made it clear that some of His sheep are not Jewish:

Jesus said, “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.” John 10:16  
(see also Deuteronomy 32:21; Zechariah 2:11; Isaiah 49:22)

“When he  
[the shepherd] has  
found it [the one  
lost sheep], he lays  
it on his shoulders,  
rejoicing  
[Greek verb χαίρω  
*chairō*].”

Luke 15:5





“And when he [the shepherd] comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with [Greek verb συγχαίρω *sugchairo*] me, for **I have found** [Greek verb εὕρισκω *heurisko*... after searching, to find a thing sought] **my sheep which was lost!**’” Luke 15:6

“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 [Greek adjective δίκαιος *dikaaios*] persons who need no repentance.” Luke 15:7

The Master Himself provides the interpretation. The shepherd is Yeshua. The lost sheep is a sinner. The ninety-nine other sheep are the righteous and pious who did not need to repent. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to seek the lost sheep just as Yeshua neglected the Pharisees and scribes in order to associate with “the sinners and the tax collectors.” The rejoicing friends and neighbors are the angels rejoicing in heaven. <https://torahportions.ffoz.org/disciples/luke/parable-of-the-lost-sheep.html>



There is joy in heaven over an open sinner who has obvious need to repent and does so at last. But there is also joy over those who have maintained a condition of righteousness by always and regularly turning to God in repentance (1 John 1:9), who do not need the thorough and soul-shaking experience of repentance which a lost person, a “lost sheep,” often goes through when he turns to God from a life pattern of sin. Clearly Yeshua does not regard the grumbling Pharisees and Torah-teachers to whom He is speaking as having maintained such a condition of righteousness; so He is trying to shake their mistaken supposition that righteousness can consist in following a set of rules apart from genuinely trusting God in one’s heart (see John 9:40–41).

Jesus, who was from heaven, assured them that the shepherd's rejoicing was comparable to the response in heaven when one sinner repents. In addition to making an immediate point to His audience, this discloses some fascinating details about heaven, including:

- Heaven is aware of what is taking place on earth.
- Heaven has celebrations.
- Repentance is considered as a great cause of celebration in heaven.



- The finding of the lost sheep represents the restoration of that separated individual back into fellowship and community with the flock to which it always belonged. This restoration comes when the individual repents. The words for repent and repentance are respectively forms of the Greek words, “*metanoeo*” and “*metanoia*.” They literally describe a change of perspective or a changed mind.
- The parable describes a sinner who belongs in the fold of Israel but who lives in a state of broken fellowship with God and his flock through disobedience. They are outside the good graces of the community. But the Good Shepherd comes looking for them. Jesus’s teachings resonate in the hearts of these outcast sinners. His gospel invites them to join Him. He calls them to change their perspective and follow Him. They repent and are reunited to the Shepherd and restored to His flock where they can flourish in His pastures.



**What about us?**

**We are all lost sheep who  
need a Shepherd**



Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and **the sheep follow him because they know his voice**. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. John 10:1-6

So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**” John 10:7-10



“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.” John 10:11-16

A faint, purple-tinted background image of a shepherd in a field with sheep. The shepherd is in the center, holding a staff, and several sheep are scattered around him. The overall tone is contemplative and spiritual.

# What about us?

## Do you need a Shepherd?