

WAESHAEL

The Lost Sheep





INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF ST. VINCENT: THE O.S.V. IS MADE UP OF LAY MINISTERS AND LAY LEADERS WHO FOLLOW THE LITURGICAL PRACTICES OF THE ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH. THOUGH MOST MEMBERS FOLLOW ANGLICAN TRADITIONS, THE ORDER INCLUDES MEMBERS OF OTHER WESTERN RITE CHURCHES, AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ORDER ARE BROAD ENOUGH TO ADAPT TO ALL WESTERN RITE LITURGIES. THE ORDER DATES BACK TO 1877, WHEN THE FIRST LOCAL GUILD OF ST. VINCENT WAS FORMED AT ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA. IN 1939, THE O.S.V. AFFILIATED WITH THE SCOTTISH AND BRITISH ACOLYTE GUILDS. THIS AFFILIATION BROUGHT ACOLYTES THROUGHOUT THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH AND PRAYER FOR ONE ANOTHER. IN 1970, THE ORDER OPENED MEMBERSHIP TO GIRLS AND WOMEN, AND TO ALL LAY MINISTERS INVOLVED IN SACRED SERVICE IN 1979. THE GOVERNORS VOTED IN 1984 TO CONTINUE AFFILIATION WITH THE NEWLY FORMED "CONTINUING" ANGLICAN BODIES AND TO, BY WORD AND EXAMPLE, CALL ALL CATHOLIC COMMUNIONS TO VISIBLE AND COMPREHENSIVE UNITY. WE ARE NOW TRULY A TRANS-CATHOLIC ORDER. I AM NOT UTTERING A FINAL PRONOUNCEMENT NOR EXPRESSING AN ESTABLISHED DOCTRINE, BUT I AM RESEARCHING TO THE LIMIT OF MY ABILITY, I AM DISCUSSING THE MEANING OF THE SCRIPTURES AND I DO NOT CLAIM TO HAVE UNDERSTOOD THAT MEANING WHOLLY OR PERFECTLY, ON MANY POINTS I HAVE A PRELIMINARY IDEA

This article by Glen C. Miller O.S.V., is an understanding of the meaning of the metaphor of the Lost Sheep as told by The Master .

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Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that equates two things in such a way that the thing being referred to indirectly takes on the character of the thing mentioned. For example: Jesus said "(you) be wise as serpents" meaning you should behave like a snake which scurries away from danger when it hears an enemy approaching.

Jesus uses the metaphor of "a lost sheep" for an Israelite who has moved far from his roots, either physically i.e living among foreigners in the Diaspora, or theologically i.e he doesn't follow the traditions of the religion. This metaphor of "lost sheep" applied to the *house of Israel* only, not to Gentiles, nor to Samaritans.

The Metaphor of “Lost Sheep”

“But he answered and said, **I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**” Matthew 15:24, KJV.

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But **go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 10:5-7, KJV.

Jesus probably used the word “sheep” as an metaphor for those people he expected to respond to his call (his “voice”.) Though Jesus told parables to multitudes, only a few recognized the meaning. The Father knew that those people who had “ears to hear.” would respond to Jesus.

In this story which we call “The Lost Sheep,” our teachers tended to focus on the sheep, itself and understood the sheep as a metaphor for a human who has not yet been saved. Jesus is often portrayed in pictures as the one who brings home the sheep i.e the one who saves the “lost” person.

Our Pastors sometimes preach the idea that we should be out in the community bringing the unchurched to our church. But Jesus never suggested this idea.

Pope Francis said: “Don’t proselytize; respect others’ beliefs. “We can inspire others through witness so that one grows together in communicating. But the worst thing of all is religious proselytism, ... The church grows by attraction, not proselytizing,” the Pope said.”

My pious opinion is that Jesus wants to teach us that the sheep had been free’d by The Father from the clutches of the Pharisees, and The Father wants the sheep to become *one of Jesus’s sheep*, and allowed to remain free.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And **I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.** My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” John 10:27-29, KJV.

Jesus uses the metaphor of “a lost sheep” so as not to be blatant about what he is going to do, which is to rescue those sheep that once belonged to the Pharisees.

Before we go any further, think about this: was that sheep “lost” by the owner? Or did that sheep escape from the wilderness, perhaps to save its own life? For it is sure that the 99 sheep would eventually be killed and eaten. Did that one sheep know what was coming up? When Jesus suggested to the owner of the 99 sheep that he would go in search of the lost sheep, he was not saying that this would be a good thing for the sheep. He said that the owner would be joyful if he caught the sheep and brought it back to the fold, because a sheep was worth something, either to sell, or as a sacrifice at the Temple.

And consider this: the Pharisee’s 99 sheep are in the wilderness, they are not in a safe place. Being *in the wilderness* is a metaphor for being uncertain about God - the spiritual condition of a man who is losing his faith. So, the Pharisees have led their people (*sheep*) into the wilderness, a condition in which they are spiritually confused. Jesus warned the Pharisees that they had closed the gate to heaven to their people, though they could open them since they had the knowledge, but they refused to enter the kingdom themselves, nor would they let others in.

**But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for
ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for
ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them
that are entering to go in. (Mt 23:13).**

Jesus is telling his listeners indirectly that those in the fold under the control of the Pharisees, can be saved from death by escaping from the wilderness, with hope that Jesus will find them before the Pharisees do. And when found by Jesus they will be made truly free.

Jesus is overjoyed when someone comes to him who has been estranged from Judaism and ostracized by the ruling elite (led into the wilderness,) and Jesus has no plans to give that person back to the Pharisees.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Now consider the situation of this story of the lost sheep. This story is told by The Master and directed towards the Pharisees and Scribes who are the teachers of Law. The Master is trying to explain why he spends his time with sinners. He says: the *repentance of*

any sinner, ¹ is a joyful experience shared by those in the kingdom of heaven. He compares that joy to the kind of joy that a Pharisee might feel on recovering a lost sheep. Let's read the story.

Then drew near unto him all the **publicans and sinners** for to hear him. And the **Pharisees and scribes** murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What 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? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And 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. I 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. (Lu 15:1-7).

There is more to this story than we have been told in children's Sunday school. Here in this story it tells that the **Pharisee** ² recovers the lost sheep. But, in our Christian art we often show The Master carrying a sheep on his shoulders. Why does it matter who finds the lost sheep? Because if the Pharisees find the lost sheep, they will put the sheep in the fold with their 99 other sheep, and it will eventually be killed and eaten. If Jesus finds the lost sheep, he will be taken from the Pharisees, and set free to graze in green pastures, which is another metaphor for a place of peace and plenty. Jesus calls his rescue of the lost sheep "giving them eternal life."

In the Gospel of Matthew The Master says:

““My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And **I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.** My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” John 10:27-29, KJV.

The Master also calls his disciples, "sheep."

¹ Repentance is a way of life called Teshuva in Judaism. One lives this life to find God.

² The owner has 100 sheep, so he must be a Pharisee or Scribe, not a poor man.

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of
wolves: **be ye therefore wise as serpents**, and
harmless as doves. **But beware of men: ...**”
Matthew 10:16, 17, KJV.³

The Master is warning his disciples that they must be wise as serpents [Aram. idiom: to scurry away from trouble] and they must beware of men who want to drag the “lost sheep” back into the fold of the Pharisees, because once within their fold, the Pharisees will “eat the sheep” or “sacrifice” them for the benefit of the Priests. These metaphors “eat the sheep” and “sacrifice them” refer to what happens to a man who is sucked back into the religion of the Pharisees and Scribes. They take his wealth, and use his services for the benefit of the Religion.

Isn't this what happens to people in many churches? This is not what Jesus had hoped for. He said “The Truth shall make you free.” Find Truth and you will be free.

In the Gospel of Thomas ⁴ we find this lesson from The Master.

(60) They saw a Samaritan carrying a lamb going into
Judaea. He said to his disciples: Why does he carry
the lamb? They said to him: **That he may kill it
and eat it.**

This Samaritan is apparently *going into Judaea* so that he may kill the sheep and eat it. Perhaps he has stolen it and is escaping the owner? (“*otherwise he will not be able to do it.*”) There is a chance for the sheep to escape as long as it is alive, but once the Samaritan carries the sheep *into Judaea*, it can be killed and eaten.

The metaphor “eat the sheep,” means to take some of the life from the man.

He said to them: So long as it is alive he will not eat it,
but if he kill it and it become a corpse. They said:
Otherwise he will not be able to do it. He said to
them: **You also, seek for yourselves a place
within for rest, lest you become a corpse and
be eaten.**

³ This was also Paul's concern: that the Jerusalem Apostles would drag his “free'd” converts into the fold of Judaism.

⁴ The Gospel of Thomas was one of the first Gospels to be accepted in the 2nd. cent. It was considered Apocryphal i.e sacred and not to be shown to the public, and so was left out of the New Testament of the 4th. cent. Bibles.

Jesus warns his disciples that they must seek within themselves for a safe haven, for if they do not find it, they will be captured and carried “into Judea.” This is also a warning for us, do not let people *pluck you from the hand of Jesus* and carry you into Judea.

Those that have ears to hear let them hear