

Parable of the Lost Sheep – Luke 15:1-7

BAAH! BAAH! Hi, my name is Rosemary, although being a sheep I think I should be called Eunice, get it, EWENICE, Oh well. I don't really know why I am trying to make silly jokes, I haven't got anything to laugh about, I have been wandering around like the proverbial lost sheep for the past two days. It's all my fault really, I never listen to what Joshua says. Joshua is the guy who looks after us sheep, I believe he is known as a shepherd, good name for someone who cares for sheep isn't it.

Anyway as I was saying, it's my fault I am lost. One of the young rams was giving me the glad eye and I went all weak kneed, my head started spinning, and before I knew it he had led me away from the rest of my friends and wanted me to go off with him. Well I wasn't having any of that, not a nice sheep like me. He told me I didn't know what I was missing, that I would have a much better life if I left the rest of the flock. When I still said no, although I so nearly said yes, he just left me and ran off leaving me all alone. I know I shouldn't have been tempted in the first place, but sometimes it's difficult to say no isn't it. I looked everywhere for the rest of the sheep but they had all gone, off to pastures new you might say. It's my own fault. I suppose I am a bit of a show off really, thinking I am better than I am. I keep on doing what I want to do and never listen to what Joshua says to me, thinking I know best and don't need his guidance. How I wish I had listened.

I have had a couple of nasty falls when I slipped on rocks and rolled and bounced down the hillside. I still have my nice thick fleece round me, I am due to have it cut off soon so I suppose it's lucky that I still have it, at least it has saved me from too many bruises when I slipped and it has kept me warm during the night, it gets really chilly out here. That's the time I've been really frightened, no pen to be put in to keep me safe, no fire to scare off the wild animals and there are lots of them, lions, leopards, wolves, snakes and I even caught sight of a bear the other day, but it was alright because Joshua was with us then, I wish he was here now. If only he was here now. I would bleat on for hours to him saying how sorry I was and I wouldn't go off again and would listen to what he was saying but I don't think it is going to happen.

I have often heard him talking to the other shepherds about what happened to his dad some years ago now. Apparently he was sitting in a field one night looking after some sheep with some other shepherds when all of a sudden a, what he called an angel appeared, saying that a saviour had been born in

Bethlehem just down the road, then a huge number of these angels appeared singing praises to God. You know that it was God who made this lovely world of ours don't you, and he made us all as well, even me.

What happened to Joshua's dad that night changed him forever and he told Joshua that he was part of the greatest moment the world has ever seen, certainly up till now, maybe the greatest it ever will. I know Joshua has followed Jesus, that's what they called the baby, now that has grown up and has heard him speak several times in different places. Telling people about their heavenly Father. Telling them to turn away from their sinful past and begin again. Not to get led astray, which is what I did and look where I am now, lost, frightened and alone. I have heard Joshua say that this Jesus even makes friends with outsiders, people that no one else likes, people who some think are not good enough to be in their company. He talks to them, tells them stories to show them how much God loves and cares for them. He laughs with them, and even eats with them, that really gets up the Pharisees and teachers of the law noses.

Joshua says that he even heals people who are ill if they have enough belief in him. Turn away from the old ways. Love, care, forgive, and look after each other especially those who are not kind to you, he tells them, I hope they listen, I wish I had.

If I was human, I would do what this Jesus says. I would forgive those who do bad things to me, like that ram who tried to lead me astray. I would even talk to that black sheep. None of us do because she is different to the rest of us. I am as bad as the others, but I can see now that I was wrong she is still a sheep just like me, and probably a lot better one. I would be nicer if someone wanted some of my hay because they were hungry. When you think about it, sharing is caring isn't it. He also says if we say we are sorry for the wrong things we do, I think humans call them sins, and really, really mean it, then God will forgive them, but I'm not human, just a silly misguided sheep so I will just have to accept that I am lost and will probably die out here.

I really miss all my friends and I wish I hadn't listened to that flashy little ram and been such a show off. What I could really do with right now is a Jesus for sheep, but there isn't one so I will just have to accept that my silly mistake has got me into this mess. It's getting dark now so I am going to try and find somewhere to hide for the night and hope the wild animals don't find me Ah! This crevice will do, night, night.

Whoah!! What's that noise? Its stones falling down the hillside, I'm really scared now, the sun isn't really up yet and I can't get any further down into this crevice or I will never get out again, SSHHHH! or whatever it is might hear me.

Wait a minute, that's voices I can hear, they are getting closer I can hear words now. Yipes it's Joshua I'd know that voice anywhere, BAAAH! BAAAH! here I am BAAAH! Great I can hear him now he's calling out to me "Rosemary, Rosemary where are you". BAAAH! I'm here.

There's a shadow, now a face, his face, I can't tell you how good it is to see him again. "That's where you are" says Joshua, "The worry you have given me wandering off like that, I thought I would never find you, where have you been you silly thing come on let's try and get you out of there, and get you back home where you belong. I've been looking for you for two days now and had to leave the rest behind, but I know they will be alright, I can trust them not to wander off, not like someone I could mention".

I am so happy. I am safe now that Joshua is here. He's pulling me up and out of this hole I have got myself into. What's he doing now? He's only put me on his shoulders, it's great to feel his strong loving arms carrying me back home, whistling softly to himself a really happy tune, what a wonderful loving and forgiving man he is, spending all that time looking for me when he didn't have to.

I can hear the rest of the flock now so we must be close to home. Joshua's calling out to all his friends to come and have a bit of party to celebrate that he has found me. I didn't know I was so important to him, after all I'm only one of many and as I said before I don't always do what I'm told, you'd think he would be really cross with me for causing him all this trouble. But all I've heard him say is how happy he is that I am not lost any more and am safely back in his loving care. No more straying for me, no more showing off. I never realised I was loved so much. He is a very special person.

It's good to be back in the safety of my pen with all my friends, and Joshua is having a great time celebrating with his friends. It reminds me of what he said about that chap Jesus I told you about earlier. He's a bit like a shepherd, a human shepherd you might say. We don't know how lucky we are. I have my Joshua and, you humans have Jesus. They are both always there for us, to guide, forgive and welcome us back when we lose our way. I am certain Jesus

and all those angels that Joshua's dad saw all those years ago would have an even bigger celebration than Joshua is having now every time that a human that had lost their way in life turned back to the way that Jesus showed them how to live. Don't you. BAAAH!

Graham Phillips