

Empire Church of the Brethren
Sunday Service Sermons

06 October 2024

Loving all Others

Text: (Read *Luke 15: 1-7*)

Whom do you love?

Whom can you love?

Whom are you willing to love?

Whom did Jesus love?

Whom does God love?

All that is for a perspective.

If we are to be like Jesus, continuing his work, then we must love as he loved, yes?

But do we and can we love as he loved?

The world that Jesus ministered to believed that God cared only for the good and obedient.

You had to earn his love.

Their God was impassive, unconcerned and unmoved concerning those who were not religious and following the law.

God only loved the "good" people.

So when Jesus paid attention to the "sinners" he was suspect.

The on lookers did not understand this man of God and his concern for the people they avoided.

Jesus was criticized by the religious people because he was concerned for the welfare of the nonreligious people around him.

Jesus responded with stories that deal with God's deep love for all of mankind.

Lost sheep, lost coin, and the lost son.

What can we learn from these stories?

The ninety and nine who were safe.

When we read this story we identify with the ninety-nine sheep that were safe in the fold.

We are pleased to be included in the fortunate majority of those who were safe.

We are grateful for the fact that we have come to know the Good Shepherd, and we enjoy the safety and provisions of his loving care.

Because of our unconscious identification with the ninety-nine, we miss the point of the parable.

We become apathetic and indifferent in regard to the lost sheep that is out in the darkness of the night.

Without intending to, we become brothers to the elder brother who enters the picture toward the end of this chapter.

We forget the grace of God that reached out to us, and we become self-righteous and coldhearted.

The lost sheep.

It is not the ninety-nine but the lost sheep that is under consideration in this parable.

The lost sheep is the symbol of those without God, those who are out in the darkness and in danger of a midnight where there is no light, no joy, and no safety.

Christ, as the Good Shepherd, came into the darkness of our world to reveal the concern God has for us.

The searching shepherd.

The shepherd had concern in his heart for the welfare of the lost sheep when he discovered it was missing from the flock.

Because of his concern for the sheep, and because of his love for each one, he went out into the darkness and danger and loneliness of the night, continuing to search until the lost sheep was found and restored.

He experienced great joy upon finding the lost sheep, and he lovingly carried it to the safety of the fold.

The Good Shepherd continues to seek the lost sheep.

Our Lord wants to use the church in the world today to seek the lost.

He wants to use pastors in this quest.

He wants the deacons to participate in the search.

The Good Shepherd needs good Sunday school teachers to teach the Word and disciple people in Bible Study.

The Good Shepherd, through the Holy Spirit, has bestowed on the individual members of the church the gifts they need to be effective in searching for lost sheep.

What is your concern for the lost sheep of the world?

How much do we care about the lost sheep not safe in the fold?

Are we willing to take a spiritual inventory to see whether or not we are like the Pharisees and teacher of the law who had no concern for the unbelieving and unreligious people around them?

Are we willing to be honest with ourselves and with God at the point of measuring the concern in our hearts for those who do not yet know him?

Jesus was doing something more than telling an interesting story about a shepherd and a lost sheep.

He was saying something about God's individual and personal care for people.

He wants us to have that same kind of concern.

This parable tells us that God is a sheep counter.

If one sheep is outside the safety of the fold, the Father God is concerned.

If you or someone you know is outside the safety of the fold, be assured that God is concerned.

Christ is seeking all lost souls.

He wants them to come to him and find him to be a loving Lord.

He wants to restore them to the father.

He wants them to experience the safety of belonging to their loving Father, the Lord God Almighty.

It is up to us to help them find the God who made them and can make their life complete.

Are you willing said the master to be my people, loving and caring for all others?

Do we answer: Love, we are willing, our spirits are yours, remold us make us, like you divine. Your guiding radiance above us shall be, a beacon to God, to love and loyalty.

Amen?

Oh yes! Amen!