

Big Strong Shoulders

I am quite sure that most people are familiar with the parable of the Lost Sheep. It is the first of a trilogy of parables about redemption. Jesus tells the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son after the Pharisees accuse him of welcoming and eating with sinners. First off, what exactly is a parable? At a basic level, a parable is a short story designed to convey a concept. In the Jewish culture at biblical times, things were explained in word pictures that were easy to understand. The parable of the Lost Sheep begins with a sheep that has strayed from its shepherd and is defenseless and in grave danger. The shepherd leaves his flock of ninety-nine sheep in order to find the one which is lost. Upon finding his sheep, he hoists it upon his big strong shoulders and takes it home. An adult sheep may weigh anywhere from 110 to 125 pounds so it would be no small effort to carry one over his shoulders. The shepherd in the story, however, didn't rebuke his straying sheep. He is overjoyed in finding that which was lost and calls to his neighbors to help him rejoice for he has found his precious lost sheep. As we take a closer look at this parable, we clearly understand that the lost sheep is about all of us. When we stray from God, we are like the sheep; shivering in the cold dark world. We are scared and defenseless. Like the sheep, we cry out in the darkness to be found. When Jesus finds us, He lovingly places us on His big strong shoulders and bears the discomfort of our sins. Just as He bore the cross for our sins. Jesus does not admonish us. The true relation of the shepherd with his friends represents God rejoicing with the angels. *"There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."* (Luke 15:7) –Sherrie Clutts DRE