

# THE SERMON

---

## Fourteenth Sunday in Pentecost

Sunday, September 14, 2025

Images: The Shepherd

Luke 15:1-10

Dear beloved Church, today we find ourselves in the second part of our sermon series titled "***Images.***" In it, we explore all of the diverse images that run throughout Scripture. In the Bible, there are numerous and strong images that capture our hearts, challenge our minds, and edify our souls. These images invite us to understand deeper spiritual realities differently.

For instance, consider how light is used all throughout the Bible. In **John 8:12**, Jesus Christ declares that He is the light of the world. This image releases a sense of warmth, direction, and hope. The image of light provides us hope that we are never alone in a world that all too often is dark.

Last Sunday, we reflected on **Jeremiah 18:1–11**, an Old Testament prophet. We saw how God is like a potter who shapes, molds, and changes us.

Today's reading from **Luke 15:1–10** provides us with another wonderful image: **the image of the Shepherd**. Here, we get not only a profession but also a great metaphor of love, solicitude, and persistent search. The good Shepherd is not just a symbol of authority but is also a representation of God's longing to find and deliver those who are lost.

In this parable, Jesus reveals to us what a truly loving shepherd is like. Have you ever realized what a shepherd did? A shepherd in those days was to move the flock, to guard, and to take care of it. It was a job that required much dedication and passion.

There were several great men in the Bible who were shepherds, and they knew just how important it was to care for the flock. **Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses**, and **David** are just a few of these men. But also, we find connections with shepherding in **Rachel, Joseph**, and Zechariah, which shows us the importance of this work in the people of Israel.

Well, so now we can truly understand why Jesus used this parable, with the image of the shepherd, because these people were very accustomed to that picture of the shepherd that Jesus was describing about himself.

Looking at the image of the shepherd, I would like to identify three key things that our Bible reveals to us regarding the heart of the Shepherd:

Let's begin with ***the Shepherd's Quest***: The initial and perhaps most compelling aspect of the Shepherd is how He works to locate you. In Jesus' parable, the shepherd doesn't abandon the one sheep because he has ninety-nine others. He chases after the one that is gone, even though it doesn't stand to reason to leave the safety of the ninety-nine.

This puts things in perspective, doesn't it? How often do we count the cost of our actions in terms of numbers, success, or social standing? We tend to ignore other people's needs in order to do what's best for the overall group in the long run. The Shepherd shows that each and every person is of importance and worthy of pursuing.

Now, consider someone in your world who is "lost" or "distant" from God's flock. It might be a neighbor, a friend, or even a family member. Are you up for breaking out of your comfort zone and reaching out? Who would God be asking you to love?

The second lesson is in the ***rejoice of the shepherd*** upon finding the lost sheep. When a shepherd finds his sheep, he doesn't simply retrieve it but carries it happily to his home and has others rejoice with him.

This picture is quite deep. It tells us that when someone gives their heart back to God, there is a lot of delight in heaven. When the lost coin and the lost sheep are found, they are like people who are far away from God. The heavenly hosts celebrate when they are found.

So, my friend, ***what should we do about the lost people around us?*** Do we judge or do we celebrate when someone repents? ***Do we quickly show mercy and love when someone turns back to God?*** Let's make our community a place where everyone who comes back is greeted with open

arms and celebrated, without judgment but with JOY.

Finally, let us think about the ***sacrifice of the shepherd***. We must appreciate the ***sacrifice*** that accompanies the vision of the Shepherd. It's not only a demonstration of love to leave the ninety-nine and seek after the one, but it is a sacrifice in itself. The shepherd risked his own safety, comfort, and means for that one sheep.

This truth takes us to the very center of the Gospel: ***Jesus' ultimate sacrifice***, like the Good Shepherd, that He laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). His love was radical and all-encompassing; it was not interested in the price tag. It sought us when we were lost.

So ***do we sacrifice anything for other people?*** We all might view it in varying ways. It can be serving in our community, giving out of our own to those who need it most, or being honest and faithful in relationships. ***What would God want you to sacrifice for you to demonstrate to other people the love of the Shepherd in you?***

Let me tell you a short story now that we've spoken about the ***Shepherd's quest, the rejoice of the Shepherd, and the sacrifice of the Shepherd.***

A few years ago, a friend of mine who worked in a large corporate office noticed a colleague who often sat alone during lunch. Despite the busy atmosphere around her, this woman seemed isolated and withdrawn. Rather than simply waving from a distance or assuming someone else would reach out, my friend decided to take the initiative. Each day, she made it a point to invite her colleague to join her and others for lunch. It seems to be simple, but it was challenging at the beginning.

At first, the woman was unsure and often said no. But my friend kept going. The woman started to open up slowly, talking about her problems and how she had felt invisible at work. As time went on, they became good friends. That woman eventually started to do well and feel better about herself. My friend and everyone else in the office were happy to see that lost soul change. Not only that, but they also became excellent friends over time. My friend

took a chance and, with the help of the Divine Shepherd, brought Joy to both of their lives.

My beloved siblings, let us embrace that image of the Shepherd who has esteem for every soul in a world that dares to ignore the individual for efficiency's purposes. Let us be willing to go after that which is lost, to be glad over its return, and to make choices that cost something out of love.

So, during this week, think about those who you are missing around us, those who need to move us and challenge us to call them, to visit them, to pray for them, to be a presence among them. Be challenged to imitate the Divine Shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine, to give value, love, and care to the missing one.

As we prepare our hearts for prayer, let us commit ourselves to being instruments of the Good Shepherd, reflecting His heart in our own lives. Let us pray...

***Good Shepherd, we thank You for bringing to us this image, who pursues us with a relentless love. Help us to reflect that same love in our lives. Give us courage to seek the lost, joy in their return, and a willingness to sacrifice for others. May our hearts break for what breaks Yours, and may we be willing to be Your hands and feet in this world. We ask for Your strength, and we pray for the opportunities to demonstrate Your love. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.***