

"How is work?", you ask... to which I reply:

"Doesn't he leave the other 99 and go after the one?" Luke 15

That's terrific if you're the one. But what if you're sheep #73 of 99? I've heard that allegedly all 99 of the 99 he left are safe. But he left. If I stop and meditate on that a moment: the shepherd left. There's despair for you.

There's a growing church in Charlotte called Elevation. It's one of those "I'm not sure I'm cool enough to go to church there" churches. One of those like the new housewife on *Real Housewives of Orange County* goes to. People who go there love it. Their pastor is an amazing preacher. He's my new MP3 choice for long runs – which, interestingly, whoever I listen to while running, I perceive as being very healthy, because he's talking while I'm running. It's like he's both running with me and managing to talk without being out of breath like I am.

Today's message was from Psalm 3 about God being your glory and the lifter of your head. He (the pastor whose name is Steven Furtick) was talking about how much our pride gets in the way and then he delivered this particular blow:

"Maybe God can't lift your head because you haven't bowed it yet."
–Steven Furtick

And what if you're the shepherd? How bad would you feel leaving the 99, go get the lost one, and come back to find a wolf attacked while you were out. Saved one, lost 99. Which *Star Trek* was it with the "Needs of the many. Needs of the one" deal?

And what if you're the shepherd and your life's work is the one sheep? It doesn't take a whole full-time shepherd to look after the one. In fact, the best and brightest, he ought to be multiplying himself training other shepherds. Right? I'm just saying we're wasting our best guy on one sheep.

And that's the thing. The one sheep is worth it.

When I feel like I'm hung up at work dealing with something that feels petty: I want to remember to ask the question, "Is he worth it?" This person who at this moment in time appears to be sapping my energy and my resources, is he worth it? Because, as it turns out, this person, image bearer of the God of the universe... yes, always worth it.

In the Mixtec language of Mexico, there are no single words for some concepts, so they are expressed by a descriptive phrase. "To be big inside," means to forgive. "To be poor inside," means to have compassion. Parables are called "wise words," and the gospel is called the "good words." The Mixtec people are hearing the good words that because God was poor inside, He sent Jesus, so He can be big inside towards us.

Also: minority language groups who don't yet have a Bible in their heart language. Worth it. The time, the effort, the money... worth it.

I like the clarity in the story. One sheep is lost. The question about leaving the 99 to find the one is rhetorical. There's no epic struggle to decide should the shepherd stay or leave to find the lost one. The one lost sheep is worth it. And I did too answer the "how is work" question. It's just an incredibly cryptic answer.

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