

MORNING SERMON OUTLINE

WHEN SHEEP WANDER

Matthew 18:12-15

Continuing in Matthew 18

1. From Children to Sheep – change of metaphor

Disciples of Jesus – members of His church – are depicted in vv. 2-10 by the picture of a child or “little ones (who believe in Me)”.

But in the parable of vv. 12-14 the image shifts to sheep in the flock. But our Lord is still speaking of His followers, the church (today).

2. Two parables of wandering sheep - Luke 15 & here

How they are alike.

Both picture a flock of sheep and a sheep that wanders.

Both picture the shepherd going out to find the lost sheep.

The crucial difference between them.

In Luke 15 our Lord is speaking of His own ministry that is drawing sinful & despised people to Himself and provoking the criticism of the Jewish leaders.

In Matthew 18, He is telling His church what to do about members who wander into sin.

3. Reality: Sheep wander.

This is the character of sheep – “prone to wander, Lord I feel it”
(William Cowper, “Come Thou Fount”).

We are not to be surprised if members fall into spiritual / moral difficulties (and this does not excuse them when they do!). Vs.7

The varieties of wandering are too numerous to count.

4. What then? What to think, what to do

Attitudes NOT to have: What’s one sheep. Good riddance.

Well, I hope he finds his way back.

BUT: GO FIND HIM ...

Even if he has sinned **against you (vs.15)**

5. God’s (revealed) will

Not His eternal & secret will in election (predestination).

THAT cannot be thwarted by wandering sheep.

BUT His revealed will:

That sheep be rescued

By whom? By fellow sheep.

The Lord uses means to preserve His people and restore wanderers.

No greater privilege or blessing: **James 5:20**

Our Lord lays a moral obligation on us to seek each other’s eternal well being – especially when that is endangered by our own disobedience.

LOVE seeks the recovering & restoration of wandering sheep.

Galatians 6:1,2.