The Lost Sheep BY Malusi Skunyana

Read Luke 15:1-7

LUKE 15:1. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

LUKE 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

LUKE 15:3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

LUKE 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

LUKE 15:5 And when he hath found [it], he layeth [it] on his shoulders, rejoicing.

LUKE 15:6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together [his] friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

LUKE 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

The parable of the lost sheep teaches us of God’s great love for the stray sinner; love that will not leave any stone unturned in order to recover the lost. It teaches us that God loves us so much He would still have given up His Son even if there were but one sinner to save. We have no reason to doubt God’s love for us and His purposes for us even if we have wandered as far away from Him as the west is from the east. He longs to reach out to us and save us if we will allow Him.

In Luke 15, we see publicans and sinners, all social outcasts, drawing close to Jesus. Then the Pharisees and scribes respond to this with a very powerful statement, “This man receives sinners, and eats with them.” They expressed their disapproval of Jesus’ association with “sinners” thus showing that they regarded themselves as better, after all they considered themselves favourites of heaven on account of their natural connection to Abraham. But they failed to understand that it is because Jesus “receives sinners” that even the vilest sinner may be saved. In fact, as Jesus kept on saying, He had not come to seek the righteous but sinners that they might repent. Indeed the Great Physician was not needed by those who like the Pharisees thought they were “well” but those who were not well drew close to Him. In Christ, those who were social outcasts found acceptance, forgiveness, healing and joy.

In response to the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus told the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and prodigal son. The parable of the lost sheep pictures a man who though still having 99 sheep in his flock, but he left the 99 and risked all in order to recover the one lost sheep. The parable has a positive ending, the lost sheep is found, and the man invites his friends and neighbours to celebrate with him. The search was not in vain. The parable expresses Jesus optimism that His death at the cross will not be in vain, lost sinners will be saved. In John 12:32 Jesus said the very same thing, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” God’s investment in the plan of salvation will have rich returns; He will gain many sons and daughters into His kingdom.

When man was separated from God by sin, God launched a mega campaign to search for him and restore him. Since the time God called out to Adam, “Where are you?” He has not ceased to reach out to the human race. By endless pleas, God has been seeking us out and offering us the gift of salvation. Ever since the fall of man, the Almighty has been in search of His children to reclaim them and reveal to them His glorious plan for them; and His search continues today. In the end, like in the parable there will be great joy in heaven when the lost is found. God rejoices everyday when we draw close to Him, but someday there will be a mega joyous celebration, when the children of God from all nations will be gathered in His kingdom saved by the blood of Jesus.

Dear friend, even today, God still reaches out to us in order to save us. His is a love that will never let go; He does not leave anything undone that can be done to save the sinner. I pray that God may reach out even to you; I pray that you open your heart to Him and let Him carry out His wonderful purposes for your life. God bless you! Amen!