

youthESource Drama

But the Sheep was Mine

by Rev. Dean Nadasdy

Based on the Gospel for Proper 19 for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

Retelling parables is a little bit like retelling a good joke. You can't expect people to laugh as hard as they did the first time. Jesus' parables are masterpieces that stand for all time on their own. There is no competing with them. Still, one tries to grasp the depths of their meanings. These dramas represent such an endeavor. They are parable on top of parables. Some nugget of truth from Jesus' stories has been pulled and recast in contemporary terms. Hopefully, the recasting enhances rather than detracts from Jesus' first and best intentions.

These are Gospel dramas. By that I mean that they are meant to enhance the reading and preaching from the Gospel (Series C) for a particular Sunday. The dramas require little staging and rehearsal. Usually, one rehearsal is adequate for production. The Focus section might be included in the morning worship folder or read before the drama is presented. The best place for the drama in the service order is probably after the Gospel has been read.

Have fun with these dramas. Probe your characters and make the lines alive with feeling. True, you're piling parables atop parables, but you're working with stories that have stood the test of centuries of retelling. You can't top the one who first told them, but you can help ensure that people today hear His message, and maybe even laugh well—twice.

FOCUS

We are the Lord's, bought with a price, each one precious.

CHARACTERS

Buzz - early morning farm show host; folksy; full of clichés

Dr. Nelson - agricultural expert from the university; sees farming as science and business

Patty - representative from the Humane Society; sweet; sincere; a bit over-bearing

Jake - a shepherd who knows his sheep and loves each one

SETTING

An early morning farm show on television provides the setting for this panel discussion. A table with the three panel members seated behind it facing the audience is necessary. Also provide a podium of some sort for Buzz, the show's host. All characters are in place as the action begins.

Buzz: (looks off to side to get cue; straightens hair; puts on smile) Mornin', folks. Fine day here in the valley. Sun's up, and we're lookin' for some rain later in the week. All in all, it's a good day. So why not settle back with us for this segment of Farm Life. Each week on Farm Life we bring together some experts who discuss a problem that you might just face some day on your farm. (turns to panel) On the panel today are the following: Dr. Hughes Nelson, a professor over at the college who teaches courses in farm management (Nelson smiles); Patty Dewhurst of the local Humane Society...

Patty: Good morning!

Buzz: And finally Jake Engel, a local sheep farmer.

Jake: Good morning, folks.

Buzz: My name's Buzz Craig. And this is Farm Life! Let's get right to the question for today's panel. This situation has been suggested by Gary Fritz of Pleasant Hill. Here goes. I'll read it, and you can share your responses with our audience. "I hold a hundred sheep and graze them on a good piece of pasture. It's an extra income for me. So I can't be spending much time on it. One sheep I've got, #96 ewe, especially worries me. It doesn't eat right. It manages to find broken fence that none of the other sheep can find and takes off on its own so that I'm always out looking for it, worrying about it or about what it's going to do to the rest of the herd. My question is this: What do I do with this ewe? I do have the whole flock to consider." There you have it, folks. Panel members, what do you say? Dr. Nelson?

Nelson: Mr. Fritz really hasn't told us enough to make an intelligent judgment here. It is not unusual, however, to have one animal who does not follow the herd instinct. Obviously, the highest value here is the safety of the man's total farm investment. Whatever his decision, he'll want to weigh his use of time and energy for that one animal versus the product yield of the entire investment. My advice would be, especially considering the part-time nature of the business to allow the animal to keep right on moving next time it breaks out of the fence. You can't sacrifice a whole business for one unruly animal.

Buzz: Thanks, Dr. Nelson. How about you, Patty? What do you say?

Patty: I'm shocked that Dr. Nelson has so little concern for the sheep. Whether it is uncooperative or not, it is alive and so deserves care and feeding. You don't just allow a farm animal to wander out across the highway. Owners of domestic and farm animals have to learn that when you own a sheep, you are responsible for it, and you can't ignore your responsibility. Perhaps the farmer could make a gift of the sheep to a friend...

Nelson: Well, I sure don't want it!

Patty: I was just trying to say that there are always alternatives to destroying an animal. After all, sheep are some of the most beautiful animals God has ever made!

Nelson: And some of the least intelligent, too. Patty, I think your heart's in the right place, but you have to realize that owning a hundred sheep is different from owning a parakeet or a puppy. Truth is that one sheep could endanger the man's whole flock if he doesn't take some measure.

Buzz: Well, folks, you can see we've got a little debate going here. Fortunately, we've got a sheep farmer right here with us. Jake Engel, what do you say?

Jake: It's never been easy for me deciding matters that can make or break my business. You see, for me it ain't part-time. I'm in this for my livelihood. When I hear about one bad sheep, I know how much time and energy can go into keepin' a rascal from hurtin' himself or the whole herd by doin' somethin' stupid. I remember one time when I had just one such rascal. Sure 'nough he found himself a fence-break that set him loose. Fortunately none of the sheep took out with him, but I knew he was gone one night in a storm 'cause he wasn't where he usually was.

Buzz: How many sheep you got, Jake?

Jake: Near a couple hundred, Buzz.

Buzz: And you knew he was gone, this particular one?

Jake: You learn to tell 'em after a while. Anyway. The storm was blowin' and howlin' and I'm out lookin' for this rascal that caused me nothin' but trouble. I'll tell you, the thought crossed my mind that I had all them other sheep waitin' for me and why not just let this wanderin' cuss get his just desserts; but, you know, this sheep was mine. I was there with him when he was first born. I'd been through thick and thin with ol' Remus.

Buzz: Remus, Jake? You called the sheep Remus?

Jake: The kids named him that when he was born. When it's your livelihood, you see, when it's more than a plaything or a hobby, you feel a kinship with every sheep in the pasture. I can't explain it 'cept to say that night, like so many others, I went out and found ol' Remus grazin' on the median of I-5 near Coburg Road. Picked the ol' ornery devil up and, sure enough, he looked at me as if to say, "Where you been so long this time, Jake?" I threw him in the pick-up and brought him home. 'Been out after him twice since then, too. Now I don't mean to say that what's good for me should be good for Gary Fritz. But the sheep was mine. I had borned him, sheered him season after season, and because I claim him I go out after him.

Buzz: Thank you, Jake.

Nelson: Makes a good story, but not a very sound way to run a business. Risky. I'd say. After all, just how much is one sheep worth?

Buzz: Well, that's all the time we have left, folks. Until next week. We wish you good farmin'. From all of us at Farm Life, thank you and good day!

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