

1<sup>st</sup> September 2023

## Lost

**“Then Jesus told them this parable: ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine ... and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?’”**

Bible, *Luke 15:3,4*

I didn’t know a sheep was lost. After all, I had a flock of sheep safe and sound, close to home and more than I could count. There have been sheep in the pastures around me for as long as I can remember, familiar, docile, unchanging, obedient sheep, soothing to look at, part of the tranquil countryside I’ve been comfortable with all my life. Me and my sheep ...

I like sheep. They don’t take much looking after, doing their own thing, munching away, undemonstrative, minding their own business. I don’t even need to be much of a shepherd. Mostly my sheep take care of themselves. I like sheep. Me and my sheep ...

But one of them was missing. I didn’t *know* that for sure. Sheep are hard to count – unless you take *ages* and funnel them into a pen, one by one. But who wants to do that with so many sheep? It *looked* like there were enough sheep in my big, docile flock. But I had a *sense*, a niggling dissatisfaction, that my flock wasn’t complete. One of them was missing.

So I left my sheep. No big deal there. No stress. I’d checked they were safe. I could leave them to their own devices. They would still be there when I got back. So I left my sheep, and went to look for the lost one. I had no plan. I didn’t know where to look. I wasn’t frantic, or anything. I just ambled around, enjoying the countryside, seeing new things, sitting, listening, sensing, moving on, still looking, wondering and hoping.

I found a sheep, just another sheep, like all the rest. Not a special, gold-plated, diamond-encrusted sheep. I didn’t even know if it was mine. I couldn’t ask it why it had wandered off. It probably didn’t even know it was lost anyway, far less found! But I lifted it on my shoulders and took it home, to join the others, to make my flock complete – for now, at least, till I sense there might be another one missing.

Oh, sorry! *You’ll* be thinking this is an exposition of Jesus’ parable. But this isn’t about Jesus. It’s not even about sheep. It’s about my faith, and the flock in the pastures around me, and my sheep that was lost.

### **A prayer for today**

*For now, Lord, my new sheep is safe with the others – if I can recognise which one it is ...*

*An original reflection © Tom Gordon*

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