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## Matthew 18:10–14—Lost Sheep

Jesus's parable of the lost sheep is told in Matthew 18:10–14:

“Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.”

The parable (another version is found in Luke 15:4–7) inspired an 1868 poem by Elizabeth Clephane, “The Ninety and Nine.” The poem tells of the shepherd’s quest to recover the sheep in terms that clearly recall Christ’s passion and suffering for sinners. The second verse reads:

“Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;  
Are they not enough for Thee?”  
But the Shepherd made answer: “This of Mine  
Has wandered away from Me.  
And although the road be rough and steep,  
I go to the desert to find My sheep.”

It was discovered after the poet's death by the evangelist L. Dwight Moody, who was touring Scotland. Moody's music minister, Ira D. Sankey, set the poem to music and it became a beloved hymn for those who appreciated its piety and sentimentality.