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Devotion for October 26th, 2021

"What do you think? If a man 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 say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of My Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

- Matthew 18:12-14

In ancient times shepherds would take their flock of sheep into the mountains. There would be less competition from other flocks for food and water. It was also cooler in the higher altitudes.

They would be far from home so they would build a temporary sheepfold. This sheepfold would be made of bushy branches and served as a sort of corral that the shepherd would mostly use at night. The shepherd would be with his sheep always and even sleep with them at night. He knew the sheep of his sheepfold. They were his and he cared for them.

The shepherd would also likely have had a helper, a sheepdog he used to help him keep his sheep together. When the time came, the shepherd would take his sheep, his little ones, back to their home pasture.

Our Bible passage doesn't say this, but I think it very likely that a good shepherd would ensure the safety of his flock prior to going out after a stray. I could imagine him placing the ninety-nine in his temporary sheepfold and put his sheepdog on sentry duty while he would be gone. Knowing his flock was safe, he would go out after the stray. He loves all of them, but the stray would be in the most danger, so he would go after it.

So, who are the little ones who are mentioned in our passage for today? We might have the idea that Jesus was only speaking of children, but earlier in the book of Matthew, He taught His disciples that to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must enter as little children. He said we must turn and become like little children. So, we humble ourselves like children. We need to believe like little children with unquestioning trust in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our shepherd.

We are the little ones and our angels are in the presence of our Father in heaven. We are not to despise any of the other little children, even the one who might have gone astray. When the shepherd, Jesus, finds the strayed sheep and the little one has repented, Jesus Himself rejoices that He has found His lost sheep. This is what Jesus said happens in heaven:

*"Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God
over one sinner who repents."
- [Luke 15:10](#)*

*From one of Christ's sheepdogs, in Christ Jesus,
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