The Lost Sheep
(Matthew 18:12-14)

Have you ever lost anything? A favourite toy or, sadder still, a much loved pet perhaps? How did you feel? Did you search high and low in a panic for it? And when you finally found it (and hopefully you did) how happy did you feel?

Around 2000 years ago, Jesus told a parable about a shepherd who lost one of his sheep. This is his story, retold:

As the stars glittered in the sky, a shepherd sat, counting the sheep that his master had asked him to watch over. Ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine...... His heart sank. One of his flock was missing – a young lamb. What if a wolf were to come and gobble him up? What if a storm came? Who would protect him? The shepherd put his head in his hands and despaired.

Making sure the other sheep were safe, he immediately set off to look for this precious one. All night he searched, over hill and over dale. Eventually, as dawn began to break through the cool morning mist, the shepherd found what he had been looking for. As he did so, a choir of birds rang out from the heavens above.

Tired and hungry, and knowing that the grass had not been greener after all, the tiny lamb gazed up into the shepherd's eyes and gave out a sorrowful bleat.

With tenderness, the shepherd reached down and gently lifted the lamb from between the rocks where he had become entrapped. Wrapping him in the folds of his shepherd's coat and cradling him close to his bosom, he tenderly carried him home.

All the other sheep bleated with joy to see their brother had been found and returned to them safely. But none were happier than the shepherd himself, who, through love and kindness, had found what once had been lost.