

The Little Lost Lamb

Inspired by Luke 15:4-6

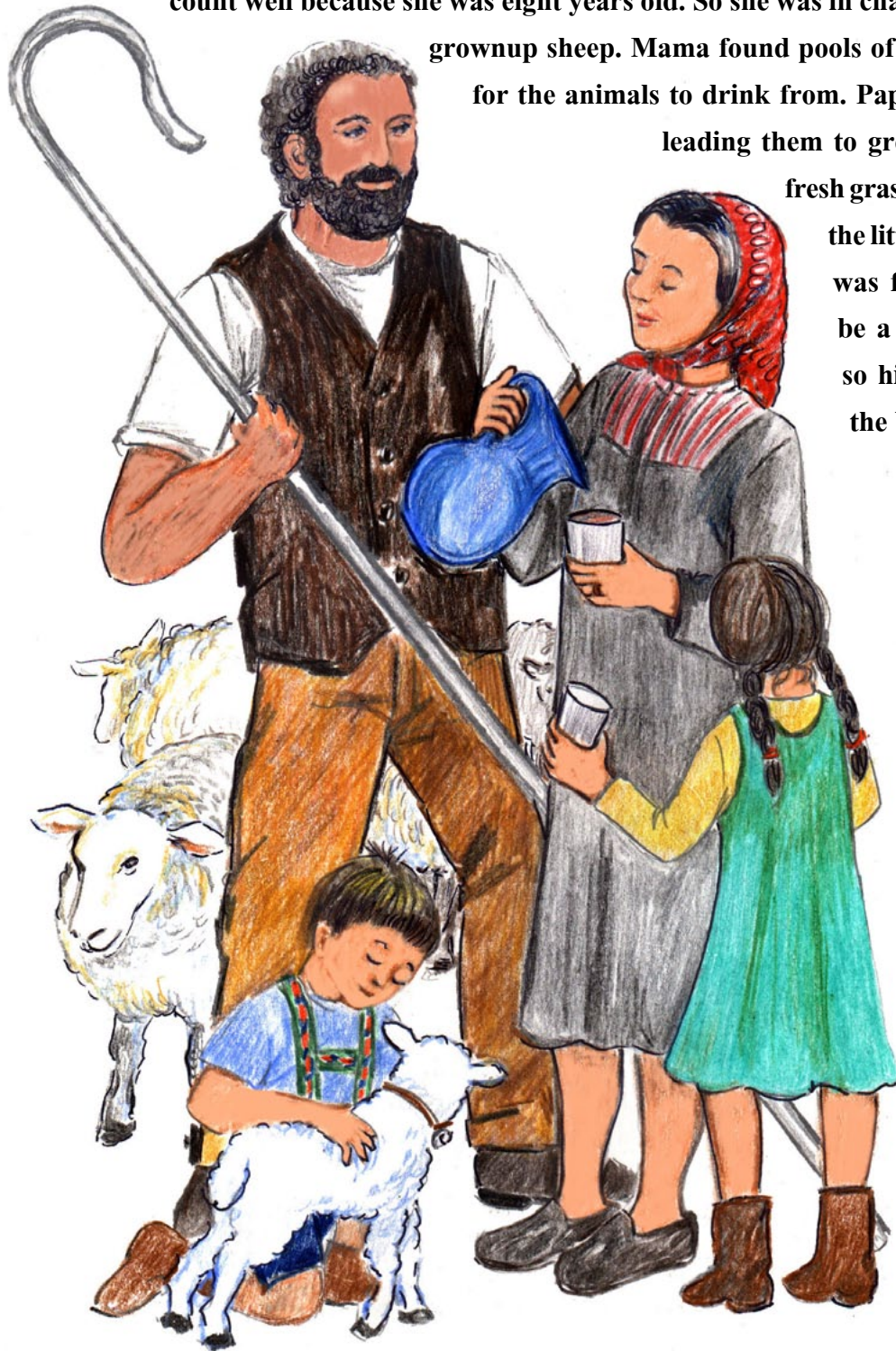


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Pictures by Marguerite Acton

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Once upon a time there was a shepherd family. There was a mama, a papa, a girl, and a little boy. To care for their sheep, each person in the family had a job to do. Sister Jenny could count well because she was eight years old. So she was in charge of counting the grownup sheep. Mama found pools of water and streams for the animals to drink from. Papa was in charge of leading them to green pastures to eat fresh grass. The youngest was the little boy, Henrick. He was five and learning to be a good counter too, so his job was to count the baby lambs.



Henrick loved to play with the little lambs. There were twelve altogether, and Henrick knew them well. Some were bigger, some smaller. He knew each one's voice when they called to their sheep mamas, their funny faces and the wiggle of their little tails. When he watched the big sheep with their babies, Henrick thought about the Lord and how much He cares for everyone and loves them.

Henrick had a favorite lamb named Jingle Bell. He made her a little collar with a jingle bell on it. She was smaller than any of the other lambs, and she was playful and sweet. Sometimes Jingle Bell seemed to think that Henrick was her mama. She followed him wherever he went. When Henrick laid down in the meadow to look for lucky clovers, Jingle Bell would sit on his back and say "BAAAH!"

One day Henrick's papa said it was time to move the flock of sheep and lambs over the mountain. There were greener pastures to eat on the other side, but it would be a long and difficult climb.

It would be a hard journey, but the greener fields would make it worthwhile. So, the shepherd family packed up all their things. Bright and early the next morning, Papa led them in a prayer to keep them safe on their journey. "Lord, we know that You are wise, You see everything we do and You know what we need. Please take care of us. Amen."



Then the family led the sheep up the mountain. Up they climbed, higher and higher. Suddenly, a wind came up from the north and blew the clouds onto the top of the mountain. It was misty, and Henrick could barely see. Mama and Papa held a rope between them for Jenny and Henrick to hold onto tightly. This way they would not get lost. The sheep at Henrick's side seemed to be climbing over the rocky ground easily, so he didn't worry much. Finally, the family reached the top, and on the other side of the mountain they could see the valley below bathed in sunlight. Henrick and Jenny ran down the hill, leading the flock to their new home. Mama led them to the brook that crossed the valley, and they all had a long drink.



After supper, around a warm fire, Papa said, “Jenny, Henrick, it is time for us to count the sheep before the sun goes down.” The sleepy children slowly began to count the sheep, yawning from their full day’s work.

Henrick counted his lambs, “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 ... 11? I must be wrong! Let me try again.” Henrick counted again more carefully. But this time he realized one lamb was gone. The one he loved the most, Jingle Bell, was missing.

“Oh Papa! I have lost Jingle Bell!” he exclaimed. Papa counted the lambs again, and sure enough she was missing. Henrick looked down at the ground, and he began to cry.

Papa said, “Henrick, I will go look for her. You must know that every lamb is important to me; I would never leave one alone or in danger.”

“Papa, I want my Jingle Bell,” cried Henrick.

“Don’t worry, my son,” Papa responded. “I will keep looking until I find her.”

“I wish that I had stayed beside her on the mountain,” said Henrick.



“If you had, little one, we might have lost you in the mist,” Papa said. “Stay here with your Mama and your sister. I will take the lantern up the mountain and look for her. Remember to trust in the Lord, my son, that all will be well, and it will be.”

When Henrick snuggled up in his blanket by the fire that night, Mama sat by his head, and Jenny lay next to him. Mama could tell they were both worried. She saw another tear slip past Henrick’s nose and touch his pillow. “You know the Lord would never leave you, Sweet Ones. He is with you now when you are worried. Your Heavenly Father watches over you, even more tenderly and closely when you are frightened. He will always keep you safe in His heart. Just as Papa will search all night for that little lost lamb, so the Lord will search for you and guard you if ever you feel lost or afraid,” said Mama.



“The Lord knows that you are worried. Let’s say the Psalm, “The Lord is my Shepherd” together as our prayer tonight. It will help us believe in the Lord’s power to make everything all right.” As they said the familiar words, Henrick felt less worried about Jingle Bell. He fell asleep with the warmth and crackle of the fire.

The next morning when Henrick woke up, the sun was just dawning. He looked up to the mountain and there in the distant grayness was a light. It was only a small spark—the size of a firefly, swinging to and fro. Suddenly, Jenny shouted, “It’s Papa’s lantern!” Henrick, Jenny and Mama began to run towards the light. As they came closer, they could see the soft woolly shape of a lamb on Papa’s shoulders.



“HOORAY!” Henrick laughed, and skipped the rest of the way to Papa. He hugged Jingle Bell’s woolly neck and kissed and patted her head gently. **“You silly little lamb, how did you lose us?”** said Henrick.





“I found her caught in a thicket of branches with rocks too high for her to climb over,” said Papa. “It is a good thing that you made that collar for her, Son, because I found her by the jingling of her bell.”

Henrick asked if he could carry her the rest of the way to their new home. As they walked, Mama began to hum a tune. It was “Little lamb who made thee?” Henrick was grateful to the Lord for taking care of Jingle Bell and his whole family. His family laughed joyfully as they returned to the new pasture for a new day.