

The Little Lost Lamb

Inspired by Luke 15:4-6



Written by Wendinne Buss
Pictures by Marguerite Acton

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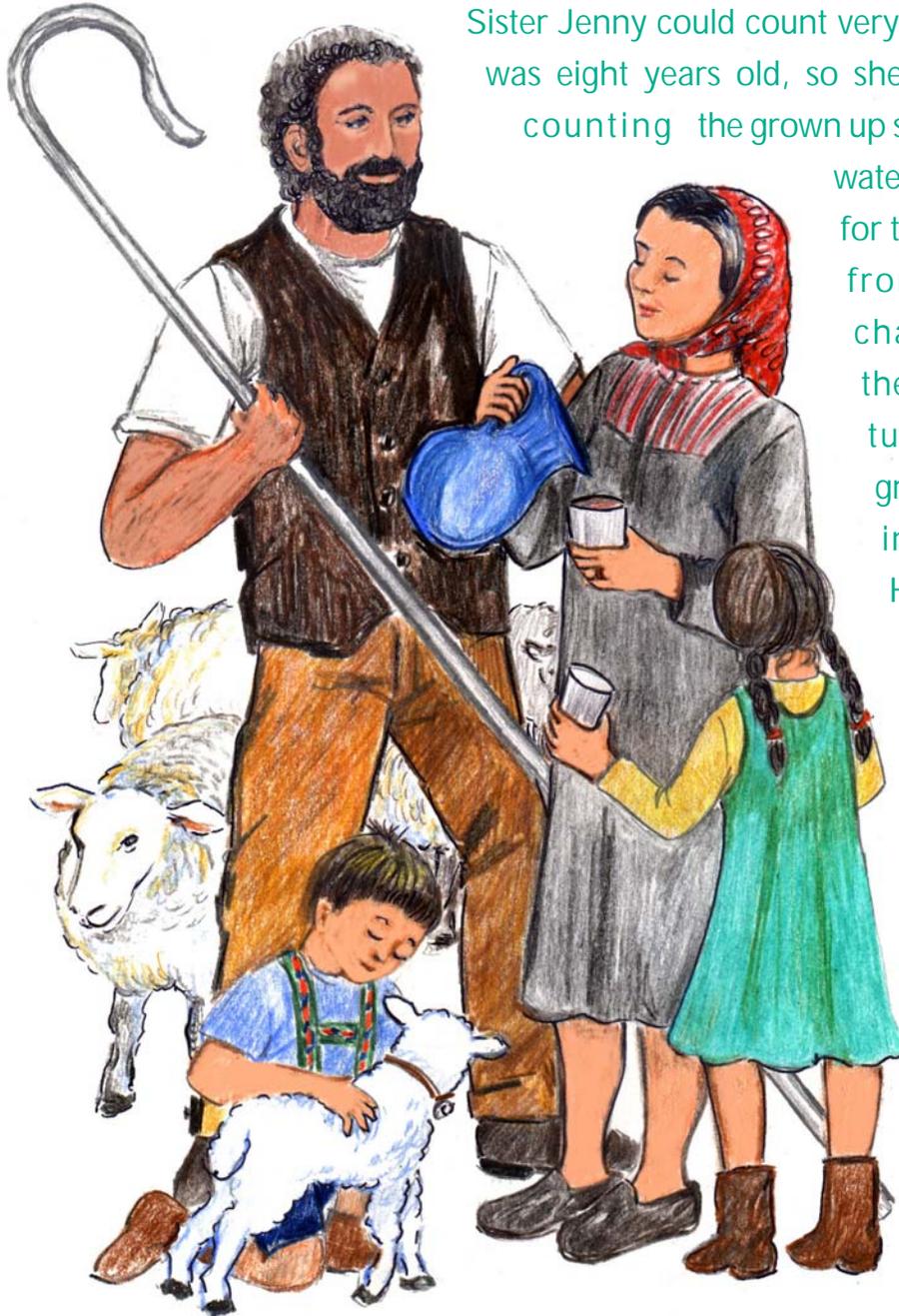
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Once upon a time there was a shepherd family that lived in a green countryside. There was a Mama and a Papa, a little girl, and a little boy.

Each person had a special job that was all their own.

Sister Jenny could count very well, now that she was eight years old, so she was in charge of counting the grown up sheep. Mama found

water pools and streams for the animals to drink from. Papa was in charge of leading them to green pastures to eat fresh grass. The youngest in the family was Henrick. He was now four and also a good counter, so his job was to count all the baby lambs.



It was springtime, and there were many lambs. Once Henrick was done with his chores he loved to run, jump and 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, their funny faces and the wiggle of their little tails. Sometimes the babies would lie on their mommies' backs to keep warm, which Henrick thought particularly funny. Watching the sheep with their babies made Henrick think about the Lord and how much He cares for everyone and loves them very much.

His favorite lamb, by far, was Jingle Bell. She was smaller than any of the other lambs, and playful and sweet. Jingle Bell seemed to think that Henrick was her mama. He had made her a little collar with a jingle bell on it, and she seemed to like it for she followed him wherever he went. Sometimes, 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 that it was time to move over the mountain. There were greener pastures on the other side, but it would be a long and difficult climb. There were many big rocks on the way up the mountain, and the weather could change suddenly and get very misty, making it hard to see.

It would be a hard journey, but the new, 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 the Lord to keep them

safe on their journey. "Lord, we know that You are very, very 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, taking rests whenever their legs got tired.

Suddenly, a wind came up from the north and blew the clouds right onto the top of the mountain. It was very misty now, 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 doing all right climbing over the rocky ground, 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, 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 stood up and slowly shuffled over to the sheep, yawning from their full day's work. Jenny took a long time counting, and Papa counted with her.

Henrick counted his lambs, "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 ... 11? I must be wrong! Let me try again." Thinking he was just sleepy, 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 think I have lost Jingle Bell!" he cried. Papa counted again, but sure enough she was missing. Henrick looked down at the ground, blinking hard.



Then 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."

"I'm so afraid," whispered Henrick.

"Don't worry, my son," Papa responded. "I will keep looking until I find her, all night if I have to."

"I wish that I had taken better care of her, " said Henrick.

"If you had, little one, we might have lost *you* in the mist," Papa said. "But 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."

When Henrick snuggled up in his blanket by the fire that night, Mama sat at his head, and Jenny lay next to him. Mama could tell they were both troubled. She saw a 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."



“The Lord knows your thoughts right at this very moment and knows that you are worried. Let us 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 a sense of calm come over him. He fell asleep with the warmth and crackle of the fire.

The next morning Henrick woke up to the cool fresh wind in his face. The sky was red with the dawning sun. He looked up to the mountain and there, among 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 with all their might. As they came closer, the soft woolly shape of a lamb could be seen on Papa’s shoulders.



“HOORAY!” Henrick laughed, clapped and skipped the rest of the way to Papa. He buried his face in Jingle Bell’s woolly neck and kissed and patted her head gently. “You silly little girl, 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, for I found her by the jingling of her bell.”

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

