

SUNDAY September 14, 2025 “Lost, Found and Celebrating Life”

Psalm 23 I Timothy 1:12-17 Luke 15:1-10

Other than when a child wandered away from you, what might be the most valuable item you have ever lost? What happened? We all know that people lose pens, and forget to pick up items when they have had to stop somewhere for a few minutes. But what item have you ever lost that was important?

It wasn't that long ago when we were in Niagara Falls at the Tunnel. This is the attraction that enables one to take an elevator down to a tunnel which leads to a viewing sight which is at water level near the falls. I remember going back through the tunnel, up the elevator and needing to use a washroom. This facility has individual closed units and when I came out we were leaving the sight and was walking out in the park. I happened to look into my purse for my phone and did not find it. I immediately ran back to the reception desk and ask if anyone turned in a phone. They said yes and wanted to know the colour. Because I could open it with my fingerprint, they knew it was mine. I also showed the young person that the picture was my cat. They said it had just been turned in a few minutes before. I was glad because I had taken many photos of the Falls at that time. But in those few minutes there was a sense of panic when my phone was lost. Once it was back in my hand- all was ok again and we carried on walking around the park. This kind of loss is an item which may be replaced at a cost. But there are different kinds of losses which as people we endure every day.

For some people, life is seen as nothing more than a series of losses. Many losses are predictable and they may be devastating but other losses bring solace when it ends suffering. Not everything is fixable with a kiss and a band- aid but there are things we may do to help us in those losses. The difficulties often arise when we face unexpected losses for which we are not prepared. We are not taught to anticipate this unpredictability of life. Life, like love, is tenuous and fragile but when life is good it is very good! And there is nothing stronger than living life to its fullest. So how do we understand being lost, losses in life and what it means to be found anew?

Today's world reveals that there are many people lost because they do not know where to turn. Sometimes being lost is because of different traumas in one's life piling up on top of the others and the choices one makes to endure or to survive. Another understanding of being lost today is that they are not having or receiving the basic necessities of life and not sure which way to go. There are also people who are lost and do not even know it! They are lost in the world

that is ever changing not only because of climactic reasons, but because it seems all is ok because life is not fair. People look for entitlement, be angry at little things because stuff happens against you and even if one has to wait a few minutes in a check-out line it is somebody's fault. Yet what does this mean? What are we teaching the next generation about power and control and demanding attention to oneself?

Being totally lost means to live and truly have little to no hope in this world! Yet as people of faith there is hope! We must remember that God's greatest concern are the people whom He has created which are lost. It is through people who care as God cares that hope may be restored or even put into place once again. But we might even ask ourselves do we care for others as God does? Or are we adding to those who are lost?

Jesus tells two stories or parables about losses. The first is the story of the shepherd in charge of one hundred sheep. The shepherd watches over these sheep day and night and ensures that they are together, and he counts them regular. And as a shepherd it is their job is to make sure they are safe, fed and watered well. When one wanders away, the shepherd leaves the 99 to look for the wanderer and rescues it, brings it back amongst the others and continues watching.

The second story is about a woman who is desperately seeking a lost coin in her house. She knows that it must be there because it was there before and it must have fallen and been covered over by the dust from the street and the floor. The woman sweeps and sweeps desperate to find the coin which has to have some value attached to it-- whether it is real or sentimental, the woman cleans and sweeps well into the evening. She has to find the coin and so chooses to the light the lamp at night in order to continue her search. She probably realized that she would not be able to sleep if she did not find the coin. The lamp is lit in order for her to look for the coin. She is not thinking about the cost of the oil but is desperately looking for the coin. Persistent in action, she cleans more and eventually finds the lost coin. Others in the neighbourhood have seen that her light is on and so she connects with them.

When the shepherd finds the sheep, he goes home to tell his friends and neighbours his story of finding the sheep. The woman invites her neighbours in to celebrate finding the lost coin. And they state, "Rejoice with me, for I have found what was lost."

The point of these parables is in what Jesus states that there is more joy in heaven in the presence of angels over the sinner who repents than those who need not. Sinners are considered lost and when each individual comes to God they are redeemed and enabled to live

a better life because they are cared for like the shepherd to the sheep. The shepherd found the sheep checked it over for injuries and led it back to the rest of the flock. The woman knew the importance of that coin to her household assets. She worked diligently and found it. And afterwards she shared the good news with neighbours.

Sometimes we forget the important part of these stories-- they rejoiced with the shepherd and the woman. They were happy again- hope had been restored in their lives.. The sheep was ok, the coin was found and put in a place of safekeeping. All was ok with the world again.

How are you in these times of lost ways and wanderings? We grieve the changes that losses of all kinds including the deaths of loved ones cause in our lives. As we remember Marilyn and Omer today, we must remember others who died during that time a year ago as well. And give thanks to God for their lives because we were touched by their self-giving service and love and we will remember them always. We grieve 'the what could have been' and strive to live in this new normal; and it is not easy to do. Yet we do so and if we believe in God, we're like that lost sheep hoping and wanting the shepherd to search for us. We have nothing to fear but need only call out and ask for help. We will be found, embraced and comforted when needed. And in time, we will celebrate that we were lost and now found once again for we are sheep of God's fold. But we must allow space for this new normal to begin. We will honour all losses with feelings as we grieve the many changes. But we will move forward.

Just think for a moment- it's been 24 years since 9/11 2001 in New York City. Youth and children today have no recollection of what this was about. Local firefighters brought this to life by having young people climbing stairs the same number as found in the towers. They also shared about the many first responders who died helping others and who have since died because of the ash and smoke. "Amazing Race Canada" stopped in Gander Newfoundland in honour of that city which welcomed thousands of people grounded from flying home at that time. And we remember people who died in the towers and the surrounding neighbourhoods all because of terrorism. People are still dying from stray bullets and attacks; and there are others who work diligently and slowly; persistently striving to figure out the best outcomes for all. Why? Because we each seek to have and experience a good and abundant life. So we move forward and try to live.

But what does it mean to celebrate? Jesus states that the shepherd and the woman call everyone together to 'rejoice with me' for finding what was lost. There was reason for celebrate

and they did! But what does it mean to celebrate? Yes life is filled with celebrations- but we need to take note what this means--commemorate, keep, and observe. These words mean "to notice or honor a day, occasion, or deed," but it also suggests acknowledging an occasion by festivity. That it is all right to laugh, to cry and to remember. But in heaven according to Jesus, there is 'joy in the presence of the angels' when people repent.

Paul writes to Timothy how he is grateful to Jesus who strengthened, judged and appointed him to his service even though what he did in the past as a blasphemer, persecutor of Christians and acted with violence, he received mercy through God's grace. Christ came into the world and saved the lost-- sinners like Paul. But in Paul's words we read his faith statement filled with hope: "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen." Paul states this because Timothy is young in faith and is growing in understanding of God.

A marine tells the story about how his squad was on a night patrol making their way through thick brush. About halfway through, they realized they had lost their map. The patrol navigator informed the rest of the squad that their odds were 1 in 359 that they would succeed in getting back to their base of operations. One person asked, "How did you come up with that figure?" He replied, "One of the degrees on the compass has to be right!" The question we need to ask is whether you are pointing to the right degree on the compass so that you are found by Christ Jesus?

Let us reflect on being lost and found as we come before God in prayer.

God come to us we pray for we are lost and need to celebrate your presence with us once again. Show us the right way to be found again. Enable us to celebrate life in all its fullness without fear knowing that you guide us each and every day. Hear our prayers we offer to you. Amen.