

Homily. 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. C. 10/11 September 2022.

A shepherd with a flock of 100, losing one, leaves them all behind until he finds his lost sheep. A woman with 10 coins, losing one, turns the entire house until she discovers it. A father with 2 sons, respecting the younger one's freedom of choice, lets him go away with all that he asks and then spends hours each day looking out for him until he comes back home. Each of these stories ends in a joyful celebration, a party shared with friends, neighbours and the household. These parables are so well known to us that we usually skate over them, untouched and unmoved.

When Jesus told these stories that wasn't the case. He was telling them within ear shot of those who had become lost; collaborators with the occupying Roman forces, thieves and cheats and an assortment of other criminals and law breakers. He was telling these parables in front of the Pharisees who thought that they weren't lost and so were the most lost of them all. In telling them He was telling us what God's heart and mind is like, how we can be loved by God and how we can become like God.

To anyone amongst us who admits to feeling lost at this time, take heart. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is out searching for you. God, like the woman is busy madly turning the house of the world inside out to find you. Your loving Father, respecting your freedom and will, every day searches the horizon from sunrise to sunset looking out for you to turn around and make your way back home. Mercy and kindness will be your reception with a feast, a celebration laid on for you free of charge.

Now to those here who have lost someone or something precious to your heart, be hopeful. Keep searching for that silly sheep who has wandered off until your flock is whole again. Never give up hope of finding your lost coin, the precious special one that completes the set. Always keep your eyes peeled towards the horizon for when your beloved wilful reckless one might make their return. Above all, be ready then to celebrate every small find, every little step in the right direction, with all the generosity that you can muster.

If our lives of faith mean anything at all; if our prayers and Mass and Eucharist has any power within them it is this; God doesn't ever give up on us or on humanity or on this world, the one and only living planet we know about and are ever likely to experience in our lifetimes. God loves us and loves it all without counting the cost as the gift of Jesus proves, through suffering and sacrifice to glory and to grace.

This, now, is our feast of life, our celebration of being found, returning safe and well to our home again. It's the gift we're welcome to enjoy so that we can welcome any and all who are lost in the same way, doing so with the mind and heart of God. For as St. Paul, who once was lost but who became found said to us; the grace of the Lord is freely abundant, along with the faith and love that is ours in Christ Jesus.