

## **All Is Not Lost (Some Are Found)**

**Intro.** On vacation I got lost on the way to our campsite. The drive is a single, rocky road that twists and swerves up the side of the hills. I was slower than my friends in their truck who knew the way better than I did. Soon they were out of sight. When I came to a fork in the road, I couldn't remember which way to go. It was a fifty/fifty chance. I took the wrong one and some other roads. Soon I realized I was lost. There is no phone service to call for directions. I decided to go back to the fork in the road and wait for my friend to find me. I got impatient and took the other road. I was about to give up and go back down the mountain when my friend found me. Being lost even for a short time was a bad feeling. The tax collectors and sinners

were judged lost and had no hope of being accepted by people like the Pharisees. The Lord changed that.

**I.** When the Lord was invited to eat with Pharisees and scribes, they criticized and argued with him. When he ate with people on the margins of society – those working for the Roman oppressors and others who were judged sinners – the same Pharisees and scribes complained about him. The Lord was doing what Pope Francis calls “accompaniment.” It means *being with people, walking with them* on their journey in order to bring them back to God. The Lord told three parables to illustrate that. I'm going to talk about two; the other is the Prodigal Son. The parable of the shepherd leaving the ninety-nine sheep to look for the one lost is crazy. Most shepherds would *never* do that. A few sheep are going to be lost. It is the simple reality of the business. A

shepherd tries to minimize the losses but doesn't put the whole flock in danger. In the other parable, the woman turned over every piece of furniture until she found the lost coin. Picture her pulling the cushions off her couch and finding it there with the popcorn and M&Ms. In both stories, the joy of finding what was lost was a reason to celebrate. A few of us have triumphantly waved the lost *keys*, phone or glasses when finally found!

**Concl.** Being lost can be *mildly irritating* like not being able to find my way out of Eagle Harbor at night the first month I was here. (Every street looks the same.) Or *very frustrating* like being lost in the hills of Montana. But there is more serious kind of being lost: losing our way *spiritually*. That is being seriously lost. The parables in today's gospel describe how the shepherd and woman never stopped

looking for what was lost. Neither will the Lord stop looking for us when we wander away. When we are found, we have a choice to allow the Lord to bring us back. Or we can say, "Leave me alone. I don't want to be found." It's hard to admit when we are lost but it is the first step to being found. The prodigal son finally admitted he was wrong and came home to his father. The Lord will keep searching for us because he thinks we are worth being found and brought home to a celebration. We are all in need of repentance. When any of us finds our way back, we must rejoice together and with the Good Shepherd.

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