

— — — —

Jesus told several stories about things that were lost, and then were found.

I guess he knew we could relate to that feeling - both of being a bit lost, and of really wanting to find that thing.. you know that thing...

Drew - help us out to see what its like to look for something!!!

.....

Jesus told one story about a woman who'd lost some coins - not just any coins - these were a wedding gift, her savings, and her pension fund - all in one - so they were really important. She wasn't going to just stop looking.

He told another story about a man who thought he'd lost his grown up son - because the son went away and decided to have nothing to do with him - it sounds very sad, but it has a happy ending. And in the middle - the father doesn't stop looking every day for the son.

And this story about a lost sheep - Sheep weren't considered especially valuable in Jesus time, and a lot of shepherd weren't good - weren't to be trusted.

These stories of Jesus have a message, and like a puzzle, they have to be worked out. So in these stores, Jesus is saying that the person who is looking for the lost thing is like God. And we are like the thing that is missing.

Its funny in the lost sheep - because sometimes we don't think we're very valuable to God - we're just one more in a 100.

And we sometimes think that God is not a good shepherd - in Jesus time the religious leaders had given rather a bad impression of God. Sometimes we think that God is always looking for what we've done wrong, trying to make us feel bad.

So Jesus really turns thing on their head! Who would think 1 sheep so valuable as to leave the 99 behind? Who could think that the shepherd cared so much for his sheep? I thought he wouldn't be bothered? Wow - what a celebration over the 1 sheep!

Jesus is telling us -

we're valuable, special, incredibly precious to God

That he is honest and good, and that he cares about each one of us. Every one of us.

Jesus is saying that when we are lost - and we all feel a bit lost from time to time - we shouldn't panic, or worry, or give up in despair, or think its all over - we should just wait right there for him to come and rescue us!!

Jesus is saying he'll keep searching till he finds us - and that he'll bring us all the way home, back to safety.

— — — — —

We're in the period after Easter, and before Pentecost. So usually we think of Easter - the resurrection and then its a kind of waiting till we get to Pentecost - the Spirit coming - the birthday of the church.. and then we're off. But I want you to imagine that we've past Pentecost

That we, like the first followers of Jesus - have the job of building the church, how do we start the church from scratch as it were?

How would you build a church from nothing?

Would you put out flyers and posters? Put things on social media and all that - calling for what? interested people? Or maybe some catchy slogan - Life? What's it all about?

Or do you start with your friends and family - come along to this new thing..
sometimes those closest to us are the hardest to reach, they're the most cynical.

And when you've got your group - what then?

Would you start with the facts of the faith? Here are some facts about God, the Bible, the Church?

Would you start with the things we do - well we like singing, usually, and there's quiet times, and someone gives a talk..

(You may know that in London a group of evangelical atheists - that's people who are keen to spread their belief that there is no God - started an atheist church. They all sing an Abba song or Elton John to start with. There's an interview slot - or testimony. A Talk, and some time of stillness or meditation - and then there's coffee afterwards. Its Church without God.

I say that because sometimes when we invite our friends along to Sunday at St James - and we say - you might like it, its peaceful, or it helps me - all good, all true - but if we just say what we do - we might be missing the main thing - WHO its about.

So I think if we were going to start a church from scratch, if I was one of those followers of Jesus in the early days - I would have started with trying to tell people about Jesus - the person at the centre of it all.

But would I have said - he died and was buried, and 3 days later he rose again?
Would I have tried to impress them with miracles - he can walk on water!
Or the healing or very profound teaching?

Well one place you could start with is what he's like... this Jesus?

And you could do a lot worse than tell people about the lost sheep and the good shepherd.

That Jesus says - if you feel a bit lost, a bit stuck, a bit of a loser - then actually Jesus is like a farmer that really cares and values each sheep, that Jesus will keep on looking for you, no matter what it costs, that he will keep looking till he finds you - stuck in lockdown, climbing the walls, stressed at yourself and your kids, bored silly, worried about money, afraid and lonely - he will find you - and he will rescue you, and he will bring you home. And he loves you and me, and all of us so much, that he will always do that, and he won't stop until he does.

That's the kind of person that Jesus is. Now, do you want to find out more about him? Shall I tell you what he thought of the greedy? Or how he touched those who were thought unclean?