

#44 15-16

Psalm 14

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-10

Seeking

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. "Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Once when David was very small, we were at a playground, in a strange city, and he was playing nicely. I walked away to find the nearest train stop with a friend, and when I returned, David was not there. I looked everywhere and a little girl pointed me in the direction he ran off to. I was terrified. Not only my fear of losing my child forever - or for the danger he might have been in - but part of me was also worried about how afraid he might feel. It broke my heart that my child would be so afraid.

We found each other in a matter of minutes, but the memory of the terror of those moments will never leave me. Luckily, nothing bad happened to him. He had looked up and didn't see me, so he went off to find me.

Now, just for a moment, think about this. The utter faith this child had, that if he started walking, he would find his mother. I found him talking to a woman pretty far away from the playground. He was frightened and concerned, but he still had his wits about him enough to talk to a kind woman who kept his attention until I could find him. We agreed that in the future he would stay put, not run to find me if something like that happens ever again. I didn't ask him before this moment if he remembers the experience with as much terror as I do . . .

Being lost - losing something valuable - it is terrifying. It feels like a void. And we like to know where we are, we like to know what we have . . . there is a stability and a security in being able to navigate our needs with confidence.

And yet - we all probably experience some of this insecurity on a daily basis, in one form or another. There is always an awareness that something could happen and we will be in that void.

I misplace things often. I lock myself out of the house, can't find my glasses or the keys, wonder what that thing was that I was supposed to remember . . . There is a sense of being on the verge of that void where I am, sadly, very accustomed. And in those times, I can keep my panic under control easily because I'm so used to these. I often just take a deep breath, say a prayer, and I literally trust in

God that a solution will find a way to me. And it often does in the form of my diligence or some outside help (ahem - Hugh Howard - how often have you let me back into my house?) (Steve, David - how often have you found my glasses for me?)

I do believe, that during those benign moments where I am lost or I have lost something - that it is my trust in God that keeps me calm enough to seek a solution. I would like to think that it was David's innocent trust in the universe that made him feel like he could just take off in a strange city and find his mother. But what about the big moments of terror - how to we find God in those?

15 years ago, the world was shaken by the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. We lost something that day. Our normal life had been lost. A trust that we had in the universe was lost. We were shocked and confused. We were glued to the TV trying to find some clue to how to deal with all this terror. Prayers, companionship, phone calls, holding each other - for those who lived through it - we have not recovered what we lost. For we live in terror still to this day.

Or have we replaced what we lost with a new life? A life of courage in the face of fear? A life of trust in the knowledge that God's people have been terrorized before and have survived the flood, come to the promised land, and our brother - our savior has overcome betrayal and torture and death . . . !

As we review the events of 15 years ago, over and over in our minds and our media - let us purposefully chose to trust in the life that God has ordained for us - one of no fear - of courage to stand up against bullies - empowered to help those being hurt - or feeling lost - let us be people of the faith that encourages humanity to be humane, and kind - and to help everyone we meet to see themselves as GOD see them, not as they see themselves or as society sees them. There are people out there - IN HERE - that are alone and afraid and sad and worried that they aren't good enough - and all of God's beloved children are more than good enough - we are precious - and perfect and loved beyond comprehension! God is on our side and we can trust in that! We can live without fear! We are being called upon to strive to live without fear!

SO how can we do that!?? How can we live without fear?

Trust . . . trust that the one who suffered and survived and returned to those he loves without wrath but with an even greater confidence in the way of love - trust that Jesus is with us every day in every way - that Jesus is the power of God incarnate - and through that incarnate power we can face our fears, and walk forth in confidence. Trust in the vision of a love that surpasses all understanding! Let us see moments of loss as moments to practice faith. Let us take our faith to create a world beyond the terror and replace this world with HOPE! For in Hope our joy returns - and in joy is how God wants our lives to be.

So, let us, at the end of this service - go the Flocks anticipating joy! In abundance! AMEN!