

## **Everyone Is Lost in Something**

**September 16, 2007**

**Rev. Nathaniel R. Elliot, Jr**

The Gospel reading from the fifteenth chapter of Luke and the twin parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, make a point that we frequently forget, and need to be reminded of over and over again: *everyone is lost in something!*

Some of us are lost in drugs. Some are lost in alcohol. Some are lost in money – either too much or too little of it. Some are lost in overeating, while others are lost in work addiction, or in work dissatisfaction or unemployment.

Some are lost in resentment. Others are lost in rage. Still others are lost in trying to control everything. Some are lost in a bad marriage, or a toxic relationship. Some are lost in perfectionism. Some are lost in niceness. Some are lost in denial. Some are lost in self-righteousness, acting as if they, like God, know good from evil, judging others, but not themselves.

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Some are lost in religion. Some are lost in recreation. Some are lost in their kids. Some are lost in hopelessness. Others are lost in ecological destruction. Some are lost in technology and the Internet. Take your pick....or, take what has picked you. The list is endless.

And there seem to be degrees of lostness too. You can lash out at someone in rage when you're tired or frustrated, and say things you can later repair. But that rage pales in comparison to one man walking the campus of an eastern university and achieving the national record for indiscriminate killing.

So the thing that jumps off the page in the two parables for today is not that a sheep wanders off, ready to be mutton for some wild beast. That's normal. It is not that a woman loses a simple keepsake, something more nearly off the shelf from

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Wall-Mart than something that sparkles from Tiffany's. These points are as commonplace as rain.

The spine-tingling part of the story is *the behavior of the shepherd and the woman*. You can just picture them: the shepherd out there scaling rocks and crawling through crevices, whistling and yelling, like a little Bo-Peep.

And then there is the woman hunkered down under the bed with her flashlight in one hand and a broom in the other, sweat glistening on her forehead, searching for the lost coin.

The Gospel Point? *Neither the shepherd nor the woman ever give up until they find that which was lost*. They don't give up when they get tired. They don't give up when they reach the breaking point. They don't give up when doubt and despair set in.

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Even if they have a sense of hopelessness, they don't give up.

*They never, ever give up until the lost is found.*

Which is why, if there is a hell people go to for being lost in the extreme, a place of eternal damnation and separation from God, Jesus does *not* affirm it. And the God Jesus proclaims will have none of it, *because the God of the Gospel never rests until all are brought home.* The lost will eternally be pursued, until they *are* found.

Lost-ness might be the original state of humanity.

It is *not* the final state.

**AMEN.**