

## HOMILY 24<sup>TH</sup> SUN OT YRC 2019

How many of you have been on a flight where the airline lost your luggage? How many of you never got your luggage back? Every year thousands of pieces of luggage are lost and never claimed. In fact, in Scottsboro, Alabama, there is a store called the Unclaimed Baggage Center. The store takes up an entire city block and they have arrangements with nearly every airline to purchase their unclaimed bags. Some of the common items include laptops, cell phones, CD players, cloths and jewelry. One of the most unusual items found in lost luggage was a guidance system for an F16 fighter jet valued at a quarter million dollars. Now, if you lose your luggage and the way home from a trip probably all that is in there is a bunch of dirty clothes and some half used toiletries. I may not lose a lot of sleep over that but I think I would spend a lot of time looking for something valued at a quarter of a million dollars!

In the Gospel reading we heard three stories about things that were lost and were found. In the first there was a lost sheep. Jesus says: “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it?” No one! No shepherd would leave his whole flock to go after one sheep. Sheep are very vulnerable to predators and if a predator were to find an unattended flock they could have a feeding frenzy! Who would do that? Jesus would. And in the second story Jesus says: “What woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it?” Scripture scholars tell us that the coin was probably only worth a penny. Many of us probably would not even bend over to pick up a penny if we saw one on the ground? Who would work so hard to find the lost coin? Jesus would. The point is, you are infinitely important to God and what you do in your life is always important to him. He will never give up on you. He will never stop searching.

In the third story we have a lot of people who are lost. Tax collectors and sinners were lost and all drawing near to listen to Jesus and he was dining with them. Jesus was looking for them and he

found them. The prodigal son was lost and his father found him. The Pharisees and scribes were lost, they were found by Jesus, but they were just criticizing Jesus for dining with the tax collectors and sinners. The older son was lost and found by his father but he would not forgive his brother. What is the difference between the tax collectors and sinners and the prodigal son on the one hand and the Pharisees and scribes and the older son on the other hand? The tax collectors, sinners and the prodigal son knew they were lost and wanted to be found, the Pharisees, scribes and older son did not even know that they were lost. Jesus is always searching for us, but unlike the sheep and the coin, human beings have to know they are lost and want to be found. The Pharisees and the scribes were not bad people. They were religious leaders. They were trying to do good, but they got lost when they encountered Jesus. They saw him as a threat. The older son was not a bad person. He was loyal to his father. He just got lost when his brother returned. You see the first step is recognizing that you are lost. And what about the tax collectors, sinners and the prodigal son? They realized they were lost and wanted to be found, but is there work over? The tax collectors and sinners had to change their lives and with Jesus' help, they could do it. The prodigal son will have to repair all of those relationships with family and friends. His work had just begun. Now Jesus was directing these three parables to the Pharisees and the scribes. After hearing Jesus they may have realized they were lost and change their lives. The older son may have had a change of heart after hearing his father. We do not know.

I do not think anyone here today is totally lost. You are here at Mass, but there are probably areas of your life where you may be lost. Maybe you keep making unhealthy choices in a particular area of your life. Maybe you are prejudice against a particular group of people. Maybe you need to forgive or reconcile. Maybe you keep repeating the same sin. Where are you lost? Jesus is looking for you; do you want to be found? If you let him Jesus will help you.