

Let's Find What We Have Lost!—Now!
Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 41:10 Luke 19:1-10
Luke 11:9 Matthew 10:39

I want to begin today by asking you to think of a time in your life when you were lost.

Maybe you were physically lost!

Lost in the woods.

Lost on a hike!

Lost on a car trip at night! Or in a storm.

Lost in another city or country!

Or—you were emotionally lost!

You didn't know what you were doing with your life.

No direction home.

No direction anywhere for that matter!—

To the point where someone might have said of you.

“They can't find themselves.”

So many of us suffer this fate in life. More than once even.

You might be feeling lost right now!

Jesus made this common human condition a central theme of his mission and his message.

He said—*“For the Son of Man came to find and to restore the lost.”*

At a time in my own life when I felt lost—not that long ago either—I wrote these metaphorical lines to express what was happening within me:

After the wreck,
and for a long time
until you came along and found me,
I did manage to survive
out here in the cold
without anyone to hope in
but myself and the love of Jesus,
in whose company,
I confess to panhandling for my soul
once or twice
on this littered city street,
wondering every minute
when a streetcar would stop
at the corner I was standing on
so I could have a brief conversation
with Joy.

*How did you come
to find me out here, Jesus?*

Hasn't the answer already been given?—*“For the Son of Man
came to find and restore the lost.*

During the pandemic, Jeannie and I have been watching six seasons of
Arts and Entertainment channel's hit western detective show *Longmire*.

It's set in Wyoming in a town that borders a large Cheyenne Indian
reservation.

One night a young Cheyenne girl is sexually assaulted by an oil rig
worker.

She is traumatized.
She can barely speak.
Her mother is beside herself.

No one but no one believes there will be any justice in the white man's world.

Another woman on "the res" invites the young victim to a sweat lodge ritual which other victims, all women, old and young, take part in.

Inside the sweat lodge, between chanting and talking, praying and feeling the strength of the other women who are there—the young woman is encouraged to search within her for the part of herself she lost in the assault.

A region of her inner world has actually died.

She needs rebirth.

Her life as she once knew it is lost.

She grieves. She joins in.

She begins to heal.

She begins to find herself again. A new self is discovered.

Let's take this fictional lost and found story and apply it to some real landscapes.

In 2014, here in Missouri, a young woman, Daisy Coleman, was a victim of a sexual assault in Maryville, Missouri. The perpetrator got off easy, and the community turned against her. Less than a month ago, Daisy committed suicide because she was unable to recover from the trauma she experienced. A sad loss. A tragedy!

A reminder of the mission we have been given—to find and restore the lost.

As we speak, a member of our extended church family, Marilane Carter—Paul Mesler's niece—remains not found after vanishing on a car trip to Alabama visit family and to seek mental health care. Ever since she last made contact with family on Aug. 1, a massive search has not turned up enough clues as to what has happened to her.

In instances like these, we feel helpless.

We are sending our prayers and our love to you, Marilane Carter, and all of your family. And to all of Daisy Coleman's family.

And while we must continue to make every effort to find those who are lost—including ourselves—we also need to admit that some matters are out of our hands. We need to look to God to act.

That doesn't mean we don't do anything, or that we stop doing what we can do to find what has been lost, or who has been lost.

We are just admitting that we can't do it by ourselves, and we are releasing our need into hands greater than our own.

A popular singing group that had disbanded for several years decided to try to regroup. A reporter asked them why.

“Because you can't sing these songs alone.” One replied. There's too many voices in them, and I'd have to sing them back and forth to myself and that wouldn't work at all.”

God is like that.

God is a kind of Community!

God is like an invisible, spiritual, community who is growing all the time—everywhere in the world— and all through the universe—and is available to everyone who is lost and is seeking to be found

Let me give you a simple illustration.

One night, while overworked mother, Katie, was doing the grocery shopping with her mother—and the father, Dale, was racing from the

kitchen to the pantry and back preparing a meal—their two year old daughter Debbie— was supposed to be playing in the family room.

Instead, she slipped into the kitchen unseen and burned her fingers badly on the oven rack.

Dale had to rush Debbie to the ER.

When the Katie and her mother arrived, Debbie was on a metal table, all bandaged, with her eyes shut, and she was whispering to herself.

“What’s she saying?” said the Katie to Dale.

They all stopped to listen.

The parents leaned in closer.

“Mommy, Daddy, Grandma . . . Mommy, Daddy, Grandma.”

A two year old’s concept of the Trinity!

The Power of Three works.

God is a community for all the lost who need to be found.

You and I need to become a part of the God community.

A 12 step thought puts it well: “The world doesn’t need super people.

The world needs super natural people who will turn the self out of their lives—and let the Divine Hand work through them.

“The Son of Man came to find and restore the lost.”

We’ll begin to turn toward a close by taking **A Big Picture.**

As this year 2020 unfolds, more and more people are seeking to **find** mental health that they have either **lost** or consciously struggle to find each day.

The Covid- 19 pandemic—the economic pandemic—the persistent anti-blackness pandemic—have created a mental health pandemic.

A person as strong and vibrant as Michelle Obama has said she is suffering from what she calls a low grade mental depression.

"I'm waking up in the middle of the night because I'm worrying about something or there's a heaviness," she said in her "The Michelle Obama Podcast. "I try to make sure I get a workout in, although there have been periods throughout this quarantine, where I just have felt too low.

"It's disheartening to see so many people who have grown tired of staying at home because the virus didn't impact them.. and "it is "exhausting" to be "waking up to yet another story of a Black man or a Black person somehow being dehumanized, or hurt, or killed, or falsely accused of something."

And at that point she hadn't even heard the racist, sexist and birther attacks on Senator Kamala Harris—that she's whorendous and isn't even a citizen.

Stop that! You are not receiving free rent in our heads!

I think we find our mental health by fighting for our mental health.

Is there any other choice?

As Jesus suggested—we need to ask, seek and knock—.

Keep knocking on the door until it is answered.

In a recent study of adults by the Center for Disease Control—40% of the respondents reported at least one mental or behavior health condition—including depression, anxiety, trauma, suicidal thoughts, stressor related disorder systems, substance abuse.

The people most affected in order of percentage are—

- 18 to 24 years olds
- unpaid caregivers of adults
- people with less than a high school diploma
- essential workers
- 25-44 year olds.

Whether you are in one of those groups or not—and you **are** feeling lost—I want to say several things to you as we conclude:

Do not keep it a secret!

Open your mouth. Connect with people who have spiritual power!

Open your heart. Share your self with people with mental health knowledge and experience.

Keep your mind open. You will find help.

God has many doors to walk through to find you in your troubles.

However bad you feel— no situation is too difficult to be bettered.

No unhappiness too great to be lessened.

Go deep

Find **the beautiful** growing within you!

Use your own beauty to connect with others who are not feeling so beautiful these days.

Love your happiness.

Keep loving whatever gives you a minute or an hour of a happy day!

Join with others who, as the great Iroquois leader Oren Lyons said “are paddling in the same Big Canoe”.

We are all straining toward the same shore!

Where the virus is subdued!

Our peoples’ souls renewed!

Where there’s no economic exploitation!

No political domination!

No race or gender hatred!

Our fears at last abated.

And when we reach that shore, we must work even more.

No matter how bad off you are, someone else is lower down—Who needs a friend or else they’ll drown.

Our congressman, Emmanuel Cleaver, grew up in Texas.

At a rally for justice downtown not long ago, he told of riding in a farmer’s pick up truck that ran off the road into a ditch.

The farmer went to the nearest farmhouse and rode back on a mule with a bridle and blinders.

The farmer took a thick rope to connect the mule to the truck’s bumper, then he shouted, “Go Henry!

Henry didn’t budge.

“Go, Henry!”

Nothing.

The farmer played with the rope for several seconds, went around the truck stomping on the ground, then shouted:

Go Jenny! Go Pete!” Go Harriet!” “C’mon Henry!

Suddenly Henry heaved and pulled the truck straight up out of the ditch.

“Why’d you do that?” Cleaver asked the farmer.

“I didn’t want Henry to think he was alone.”

You are not alone.

You are going to be found.

“The Son of man came to find and restore the lost!”

Rev. Scott Myers

Westport Presbyterian Church

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