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Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Proper 19
Jer 4:11-12, 22-28 and Ps 14,
1 Tim 1:12-17
Luke 15 on Lostness (coin, sheep, son)

The stories of lostness in Luke alert us to the tendency that may be in us to blame the lost thing for its lostness, and therefore to be like the bad shepherd who grumbles because something or someone is lost, and who spread the blame for that lostness everywhere else other than where it should lie—with the one who was charged with keeping it safe in the first place.

Take a moment to reflect on the last time you can recall having lost or misplaced something of value. What was it? When did you notice it was missing? How did that feel? What emotions were stirred in the search? If it was found, how did the world change?

Having rested with these questions for a time, what effect has this reflection had on your understanding of God?

God of all lost things,
If it is your will to lead us on such difficult paths, then we implore you, send us at least during these days and hours the Holy Spirit of faithfulness, steadfastness and perseverance, so that we can go forward in blind confidence, holding to the resolutions which we chose when your light showed us the path and your joy enlarged our hearts. Yes, in the midst of such loneliness give us a spirit of courage and determination.

Give us the unconditional confidence to know that even in these times of loneliness we are not forsaken by your grace, that indiscerned you are with us. Give us a spirit which faithfully recalls the past and your loving visitations; a spirit which looks forward to the tangible proofs of your love, that will come again.

When you grant us your comfort, let there come with it a spirit of humility and of readiness to serve you even when we are unconsolated.

Amen
(from Karl Rahner's "Prayers for Meditation")

Jesus didn't just tell people to meet him at the destination point. Instead, he walked with them, broke bread with them, and shared life with them. So, whether you are in a position to give or receive guidance, let's put away the dinner party china, and share what's real, ordinary, and authentic in our lives.

That is exactly what is seen at small town parades! Real! Nothing like the down-to-earth hello's, and so good to see you, where've you been?

So an elderly gentleman was out walking with his young grandson. "How far are we from home?" he asked the grandson. The boy answered, "Grandpa, I don't know." The grandfather then asked, "Well, where are you?" Again the youngster answered, "I don't know." Then the grandfather said good-naturedly, "Sounds to me as if you are lost." The boy looked up and said, "Nope, I can't be lost. I'm with you." Ultimately that is the answer to those of us who are lost too. We can't be lost if He is with us.

Did someone go through our world and change the price tags that determine what we value? And what grounds us? It feels that way to me. In conversations and email, I hear two consistent themes; depletion (from overload, distraction and hurry) and disconnect (diminished trust from fear and projection).

The cacophony in our world is loud. And if we're at all insecure about our status, we are susceptible to (blinded by) public opinion, social media pressure and mob mentality. Bluntly, we lose our way. Okay, I'll personalize this; I lose my way. And here's how I know; when I demean, exclude, diminish, withhold mercy or withhold empathy (from others or myself) I lose my way. **So. Here's the deal: We need to pause. It is necessary to "quiet the internal noise," in order to hear the gentle lessons of the heart and stories about sufficiency, not scarcity.**

In a national magazine, an ad for the Humane Society minced no words. Above an adorable puppy and kitten, the ad read, "It's who owns them that makes them important."

Our wellbeing, is about who or what, owns us. The good news is this; when we lose our way, our authentic self is not gone. It's just been unembraced, and marginalized.

There is a bad car accident on a busy street. A woman, from one of the vehicles, lay in the street, in need of medical assistance. A young woman bends over the body. A man rushes over.

"Move away please," he tells the woman. "I've had CPR training. Let me handle this." He pulls out his training manual. After a minute, the young woman taps him on the shoulder and says, "When you get to the part about calling a doctor, I'm already here." That'll preach.

In Parker Palmer's words, **"Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood. As we do so, we will**

find our path of authentic service in the world.”

So. Let us wade in, returning to the truth of who we are (you know, the one already here), and to the light we can spill. To live fully into the self I've been given, an authentic self not gummed up with so many limiting stories.

And Lord, it took me back to something that I'd lost Somewhere, somehow along the way. Kris Kristofferson, Sunday Morning Coming Down Mother Teresa once told a roomful of lepers how much God loved them. She told them that they are “a gift to the rest of us.”

Interrupting her, an old leper raises his hand, and she calls on him. “Could you repeat that again?” he asks. “It did me good. So, would you mind; just saying it again.”

Yes please. Just say it again. I love the title of Tim O'Brien's book, *The Things They Carried* (about a group of soldiers in Vietnam). The title fits what we're asking today, What do we carry as reminders in order to sustain, replenish and nourish, and not lose our way?

I have a medicine pouch. A gift from a Native American friend. When the Shawnee and Chippewa (and other early people) went on hunts or vision quests or long journeys, each traveler would carry in a small rawhide pouch various tokens of spiritual power—perhaps a feather, a bit of fur, a claw, a carved root, a pinch of tobacco, a pebble or a shell. These were not simply magical charms; they were reminders of the energies that sustain all of life. By gathering these talismans into a medicine pouch, the hunter, traveler, or visionary seeker was

recollecting the sources of healing and bounty and beauty. All of it marinated, by the way, in an elixir of humor. Because I do know this; if my pouch is filled with a need for control and answers, I lose lightheartedness and can easily be seized with frustration, fear, panic, rage, despair, depression and exasperation. (You get the picture?) Let's just call it heatstroke of the heart.

But what if?

What if... **the “tokens” in that pouch are not a magic wand to undo life, but instead, the power and the freedom to embrace the life we have been given and to create life for those around us?**

What if... wired to care, we see in this life, this day, even in the very muddle of the ordinary, even in the very chaos, the permission to trust our sufficiency, embrace our wounds as they become sacred wounds, and become places of empathy, compassion, healing. Because grace is alive and well. **“Spirituality means waking up.”** (Anthony de Mello reminds us.) To the power of the present moment. There is no doubt that waking up isn't always cheerful. Or easy. It is, however, worth it. Because wholehearted people live present, susceptible to tenderness and mercy, human touch and healing.

Yes please, Just say it again. Here's why my medicine pouch resonates; I need something visceral, incarnational, liturgical. I am, literally, grounded. We cut ourselves little slack. Because we need invitations to marinate in grace. To remember that the sacred is close by. To see life in fullness, hopefulness, wonder, gratitude, beauty, silence, prayer, connection and

sufficiency. And from this marinade of grace, we embrace our humanity and all that enriches it; empathy, tenderness, inclusion, forgiveness. We let ourselves spill the light we receive, we give, offer, hold, touch, care, soothe, empathize and invite sanctuary. What's in your medicine pouch this week?

Weekend To-Do's

- *2nd Saturday Spaghetti Dinner at St. John's in New Baltimore 4:00-7:00
- *Local High School Football
- ***'Suicide Prevention Walk'** Saturday, September 14, at Stony Creek/Romeo First Congregational, UCC for information - <https://afsp.donordrive.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=donordrive.team&teamID=223640>
- *Walk at your local park, talk to someone new
- *Try out 'Church' again
- *18 years since 9/11 did your local church toll the bells for each year?



My goodness, that girl can sing!

