



Epiphany 1 2019 8.30 am

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

Stories of things being Lost and Found can be found throughout the Gospels.

Jesus liked to use such stories in many of his parables: a lost coin, a lost sheep, a prodigal and wayward son, the traveller who lost his way among robbers along the treacherous road from Jerusalem to Jericho and the list goes on.

But in this morning's Gospel reading, is not a *thing* that is lost, nor just someone in a story, but Jesus himself.

Jesus has been left behind in Jerusalem through a series of miscommunications.

Mary and Joseph assume that their son is somewhere in the crowd of extended family members, neighbours and friends who have travelled to Jerusalem with them and are now making their way home together to Nazareth.

But like David and Samantha Cameron who left their 8 year old daughter Nancy in a pub in Cadsden some years ago, Mary and Joseph come to realise that they have left Jesus behind!

When they eventually track Jesus down, all is well; he is safe in the precincts of the Temple, engaged in an extended Bible study session with scholars who have spent a life-time mediating and reflecting on the Hebrew Scriptures.

Everyone who heard him speak was amazed by his depth of understanding and, as Luke tells us, Jesus was more than holding his own.

Nevertheless, as any mother would, Mary's first response seems to have been not, 'I'm so sorry son, what could we have been thinking about?' but, 'What do you think you're doing? How could you just sit there whilst your father and I have been frantically beside ourselves wondering what had happened to you?'

Jesus' answer to his parents was perhaps less than helpful.

Like any surly teenager Jesus replies with, 'Why did you even bother coming back to look for me? I'm fine. This is my *home*. These are the people I need to be with, these are types I want to hang around with. Get over it, I am in my Father's house doing his business!'

And just like the parents of any teenager, all that Mary and Joseph can do is shrug their shoulders, because the words he utters just don't make any sense to them at all.

Unlike the things or the people in the parables which Jesus enjoyed telling nearly twenty years later, Jesus wasn't lost.

He might have been missing, but he wasn't lost! Jesus knew exactly where he was, and he knew exactly what he was doing, he knew exactly *why* he *was* where he *was* – even if he hadn't bothered to tell his parents.

We might say that Luke's Gospel is the lost-and-found Gospel. For Luke, the Good News - the Gospel - is all about being lost and being found.

The only One who cannot be lost is Jesus.

In perfect obedience to his heavenly Father's will, Jesus' life was lived as the Father intended all lives to be lived.

There was never a time when he was not 'about' his Father's business, seeking out the lost, summoning the wayward, healing the sick, raising the dead, drawing us - into his perfect obedience, inviting us to align our wills with God's perfect will, forgiving us the sins which separate us from God and neighbour.

Transforming the tragic human story of being lost and separated from God into a hope-filled story about being found and reconciled with the Father through his perfect obedience in the power and by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Through his life of perfect obedience, through his teaching and preaching and healing, through his betrayal and Passion and death, through his resurrection, and ascension, Jesus seeks out the lost, and he *finds* us, he shows us the way home, shows *us* how to be about our Father's business.

At the very end of his gospel, St Luke shows us a couple of people who, like Mary and Joseph, thought they'd lost Jesus in Jerusalem. Pilgrims making their home who thought they'd left Jesus behind- this time pinned to a cross outside the walls of Jerusalem.

But, as they make their sad and dejected way back home to Emmaus, Jesus *finds them*; he opens the Scriptures to them; he sits down and takes bread and blesses it and then he breaks it and gives it to them and they know, they know at once, that Jesus has *not* been lost to them but rather, that *they* have been found by *him*!

This is the story of the Church. Jesus seeking out the lost, Jesus forgiving our sins, Jesus inviting us to live the life of the Kingdom in obedience to the Father, making himself known

to us in Scripture, in fellowship, in prayer and, as we do now,
in the breaking of bread.

Thanks be to God!