

09/15/13 ..... 24 C

-- Maybe it's a guy thing. We just don't like to admit when we're lost. I have to be really desperate in order to ask someone for directions. And don't think the GPS solves this issue, with construction, new streets and signs, forcing it to "recalculate" until you are sick of hearing that voice.

-- We want people to think we know where we're at and where we're going. And I suspect that's not just true for men.

-- Jesus speaks to us about being lost. He tells us of sheep and coins that get lost. And then he tells a story about two sons: one obviously goes astray, and the other is really lost without even leaving home.

-- St. Paul talks about his own life. He thought he had it together as a righteous Jewish teacher. He even fought against those "heretics" who were Jesus-followers.

-- But he found out that he was lost in his ignorance. He knew a lot of things, but he did not really know God's love until he opened himself up to God's grace and mercy.

-- Which brings us to look at ourselves. We probably read the parables about the lost sheep and the lost coin and think about the person who is way off track, morally speaking. Perhaps we think about a drug addict who steals for a living, or a woman stuck in prostitution.

-- To be sure, there are people like that whom Jesus speaks to. No one is hopeless in the sight of a God who seeks out the person who is obviously lost.

-- But most of us are not in that situation. Perhaps some of us have been in the past, but if we're here, we've probably "settled down," so to speak. It would be all too easy to include ourselves among the 99 who have no need of repentance.

-- Then we may begin to wonder whether Jesus cares about us after we read these stories. But, of course, that misses the point.

-- In fact, we are all in need of repentance, even those of us who are righteous. And that doesn't simply mean we need to be sorry for the little sins we all admit that we commit.

- On a deeper level, we need to recognize where we are lost. Some of us may be so self-righteous that we are intolerant of those who fall short of our standards, sort of like the older son in the gospel.
- Many of us may put too much of ourselves into our careers, or getting a fine house or our adult toys. Some of us may put so much energy into pleasing our children that we neglect other important things.
- And we can do this while continuing to do our religious “things” in life, but not having God’s values as a priority. That situation makes us just as lost as the drug addict or prostitute.
- The challenge for most of us is to realize that we can be—and often are—righteous people who are lost. We need to admit our poverty before the Lord, and turn back to him.
- The good news is that the Lord is waiting for us with open arms. He offers healing in many ways, especially through the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- Yes, his arms are open. He seeks us out. But we can still hide from him and refuse to return to his arms.
- May we be willing to admit we are lost, and allow the Lord to bring us back home.