

I think it's safe for me to say that we have ALL, some time in our lives, have lost something, something of value, something of importance, something meaningful to us, and we've taken the time and effort to look for it high and low until we found it. And in those times that the item couldn't be found we felt remorse and sadness for the loss.

A couple of months ago I lost, or rather misplaced, my cell phone. I was upset with myself for not paying closer attention to where I left it. I searched for over an hour, even had it disabled so no one else could get into my files if found. I was fortunate and did finally find it. And do you know where I found it? In the last place I looked. In any case, I was happy to have it back.

Now I may be oversimplifying the readings for today, but I see in each a story of loss. The lost sheep in the desert; the lost coin in the house; the lost malcontent son; a persecutor lost in his zeal to destroy others; an entire people, a NATION of people, lost in their own self-righteousness and arrogance.

And in each story there is the undercurrent theme of SALVATION. The RECOVERY of the lost sheep and the coin, returned to where they belong. The malcontent son finds REDEMPTION in the loving arms of his father. The persecutor, St Paul, and the people of Israel, those just rescued from Egypt, find DELIVERANCE from their unbelief and misguided faith by a loving and forgiving God. Recovery, redemption, and deliverance are all synonyms for the word salvation.

In each of these readings, the subjects of these stories, the sheep, the coin, the prodigal son, St Paul the persecutor, and God's own chosen people, the subjects each represent a sinful people. A SINFUL PEOPLE who God took the time, the patience, the loving care to search out, and rejoice when they were back where they belonged, with HIM.

We here today are those lost subjects, a sinful people, whom God waits with open arms to welcome back to Himself, and rejoices when even just one of us is found.

God has ALWAYS been generous to those who are lost. He sent the prophets to speak His words. He sent His Son to show the way back to the Father. And we have His grace through the sacraments to strengthen our spirits. He feeds us with His body and blood, and we hear His forgiveness with our own ears in the sacrament of confession.

Think about this - what more joy does a parent have when an errant child comes to them and apologizes for something they've done wrong. What more relief does that child have after confessing and hears the words, "I forgive you", while loving arms surround them to hold them close. This is confession. This is reconciliation. This is the love God has for us. I was lost, but now I'm found. Thanks be to God.