

Found
April 27 2025

Have you ever been lost? ... I don't mean just a little lost either, like when you're trying to find the address you are going to. I mean lost to the point where all those panicky emotions might start to set in.

I thought of two stories from my past when I contemplated someone being lost. The first one is from when we took our daughters Lisa & Vicki to Washington DC when they were 6 & 8 years old. Everywhere we went we stressed that we all had to be aware of our surroundings and stay together, and that mostly worked out OK.

But when we were in the Lincoln Memorial, our overly confident 8 year-old strayed off and we were ready to go. We spotted her pretty quickly, but being parents decided to teach her a lesson. We watched her from a distance, and even went on down the steps out front. I took a picture of her as she emerged, looking for us, and we called it, "*Lisa Lost.*"

My other story of lostness comes from an outing to build tree stands with two friends. One of them was our self-confident leader, so we just followed him into the woods which we assumed he knew well. We messed around until it began to get dark, and then started out. The problem was that our leader had no clue how to get back out. As we went along with him, he would stop and say things like, "*oh wait, I think we need to go this way*" and proceeded to take us in zig-zag directions as it got darker, the woods got thicker, the snake-infested swamp waters surrounded us, and of course voracious mosquitoes took advantage of our vulnerability.

When it was clear he was out of ideas, and he finally conceded he had no idea how to get back to our truck, he let me take charge and we finally began walking in a straight line, following the light of the moon, and fairly quickly came upon a dirt road and were able to make it back from there.

We all have stories of being lost, and since we're all here right now I assume they all end with how we were able to find our way eventually.

In the case of Lisa being lost on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, she had her parents watching her the whole way, and in the end was assured that we were not about to forsake her just because she neglected to stay with us. In the case of our trek in the woods, we finally chose to follow the light which had been shining upon us all along. What are some of the sources that helped *you* when you were lost?

The setting for today's scripture has Jesus' disciples feeling lost; it was the day of resurrection but they had not seen Jesus yet. The empty tomb had been discovered, Mary Magdalene claimed to have spoken with Jesus, and a sense of confusion and loss pervaded the disciples as they huddled together in hiding.

That's where we left off in the story of Resurrection Day last week because that was all that had happened up until the 10:00 hour that we were worshipping, but that wasn't the end of what the Bible tells us about for that day. Let me explain: Those that are here regularly know that Holy Week is one of my favorite times of the year because it is one of the few things we celebrate in the Church that is done on the actual historical date that it originally occurred.

Because of that, my preference is to not jump the gun by reading ahead to what had not happened yet. Since I left us hanging at mid-day last week, to catch us up to speed we're going to read about what happened later that day after Mary came and told everyone that she had seen the Lord:

John 20:19-23 *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

>>> They were there locked in *for fear of the Jewish leaders*, yet Jesus found them. Have you ever "locked yourself away" from someone or something out a fear of some sort? I think we can all say that in some way or another we have. The good news for us is that when we might do that, Jesus can find us, can be present in those places we might be hiding away in. Don't ever forget that – Jesus not only saves, but he seeks us out and finds us wherever we are.

Jesus found the disciples and followers that had *the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders*, but it turns out that not all of them were present that evening, one apparently arrived late because their Uber driver cancelled on him;

John 20:24-25 *Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."*

>>> This is where Thomas got sidled with being considered the doubter, but I always feel compelled to point out that the others just told him that *Jesus showed them his hands and side*. They had experienced that and so believed – it can be said that *The Twin* was just saying he deserved the same thing.

Do you believe the story of Jesus being raised and appearing as scripture tells us he did? Show of hands – who has seen the nail marks in his hands and put their finger where the nails were, or put their hand into his side?... (I didn't think so) We believe not because we saw it firsthand, but because of the testimony of those who did and because of the faith of so many generations that have believed in and carried forth their testimonies. Are you one of the ones who is carrying that faith forward to new generations? There are plenty more souls who need to know that they too can be found by Jesus in a life-changing way.

But back to our gospel story; we're caught up to what happened last Sunday night, but let's see what happened on today, 2,000 years ago:

John 20:26-31 *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

>>> This last little bit is the part that really intrigues me; I want to know some of the other stories of Jesus - not so that I might believe any more, but *because* I believe and I would love to know more details. How about you? It must have been wonderful for those disciples; to be found by Jesus. Notice that the story doesn't have them out looking for Jesus - they were hiding from the authorities. Yet Jesus found them.

Jesus finds *us* where we are; especially when we are lost. Sometimes like in the story of our daughter being lost in Washington DC, when we as her parents were there watching before she knew she was lost; waiting for her to realize that she was lost, and praying that she would look for us in the right places.

Sometimes Jesus finds us in the swamps of our nights, shining down like a moonbeam, beckoning us to follow the light to safety. Sometimes when we've sealed ourselves into our upper rooms, he appears there among us and offers us peace.

And when Jesus finds us, do we recognize him? Do we believe that it is him? Do we need to see, to have evidence like Thomas did? Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.*" There is no place where Jesus cannot find us. He came back from the depths of hell to find his disciples again, and he will come from wherever he has to in order to find us.

Where have you been lost? How have you been found? Where has Jesus found you? So great is the *Father's* love for us, that he would send his very Son from his side to look for us. So great is the *Son's* love for us that he would endure undeserved and untold suffering in order that we might be found. So mighty is the power of the *Holy Spirit* that we can be found in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in.

This is the good news of the Easter season. Jesus finds us where we are and offers us peace. This peace is for you, and you, and you. What a relief that we are found, what a relief that Jesus is alive; and how humbling it is that he chooses to reveal himself to *us*. May we find comfort in that peace, and may we seek to share it with the world. Amen.