

A famous quote in M. Night Shyamalan movie, The Sixth Sense, is

“I see dead people. All the time. They don’t know they’re dead.”

I see lost people. All the time. They don’t know they’re lost.

Isn’t that usually the case? Usually we just go about our business thinking we’re moving in the right direction until suddenly, we aren’t. Even then, we deny the fact that we need to ask directions.

People may tell us we’re lost. These folks either see us flailing about with a wild panicked look on our face or we’re just waaaaaay too off course for our own good. Our family was trying to make its way from Washington, DC, to West Point, NY, in 1974. We got lost in downtown Baltimore, pulling a camper.

Really lost.

Scary lost.

We were saved by a truck driver who called out of his truck's window and told us to follow him and he led my dad out of the city. Forty-five years later, I don't think my mother's ever been back to Baltimore.

God saw the mess the Israelites had gotten themselves into and wasn't happy. But, they were dangerously lost – even though they didn't know it. Thanks to Moses having a cool head and finding the right words to say at the right moment, God softened God's heart and gave the people a means through which to continue their journey. I wonder if the truck driver knew he was Moses to us that day?

Yet, sometimes those who are lost don't understand how lost they are.

How could a coin know it's lost. It's just a coin.

How could a sheep know it's lost? It's just being a sheep.

There's no outside context to tell the coin or sheep otherwise.

They are lost because they've not been kept track of by the ones who were supposed to do that. They didn't lose themselves by themselves.

Those lost people I see all the time? They didn't lose themselves by themselves either. Some of them live on the street. Some of them go in and out of psychosis, depending on whether or not they take their medicine. Some are just at an age where their brains and their bodies are making it difficult to understand who they are.

Some are grieving losses. Many deal daily with pain in their body or their souls and don't want to or don't know how to ask for help. Some of the people I see know they are lost somehow. Many do not. Denial is strong and pervasive. So is fear, fear of being less than perfect in a world that idolizes perfection.

To those hearing this parable, there is an element of incredulity.

No shepherd would leave a flock alone to search for one lost sheep. He would return to a flock decimated by wild animals or stolen by another shepherd.

Women having that kind of money would be rare in those days. If you really did have the ability to have 10 coins, you wouldn't worry about one going missing.

And, why on earth would you throw a party and spend the rest when you find the lost coin? None of this makes sense. It's all too costly.

That's why those who don't know they are lost require someone who values them enough to search for them, even if it is costly.

That someone is God. God, for whom our being found was costly indeed.

I love how Jesus (according to Luke) paints God's picture. The lost coin is found by God, who is a woman who searches high and low, and sweeps away the dust, brushing away anything that might hinder a discovery. The sheep is found by a shepherd, a societal outcast, who carries the sheep tenderly back to the fold.

The writers of Exodus have given Moses a divine consciousness in order to remind Yahweh that the chosen people were lost and needed to be found again AND be reminded of the ONE who rescued them and to whom they owed everything.

We've all been lost. There are times when we know it and times when we are unaware. Can you remember those times?

When you look back, who helped find you again?

Who brought you to your senses? A parent? A trusted friend? A teacher? An AA member? A clergyperson? Someone who was homeless?

Behold. God was working through all those people,
telling you that you are valued,
reminding you that you are loved beyond measure,
showing you the promised land just beyond where you've become stuck,
and helping you get there.

As the Body of Christ, we are tasked with seeking out the lost, connecting them back into community, and helping them along their journey.

It's funny, that's exactly what the character Cole did in the movie. He, along with his death-denying psychologist sought out the ones who were stuck between death and life and helped them along toward heaven, helping those who were left behind through their grief as well.

As we travel together on our Christian journey, I trust we can keep watch for those here and outside these walls who might be lost, alone, frightened, or drifting. There is a place of healing here for them. God's love is here for them.

God's love is here for all of us.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares, we have already come.

'Twas Grace that brought us safe thus far, and Grace will lead us home.

Amen.