



Dear friends,

What is the biggest thing that you have ever lost or at best mislaid? I appear to have the ability to lose quite large items. On Sunday the 21st Sept, I arrived at Heswall Methodist Church for the Harvest Parade Service which was to be focused upon God in creation giving us everything that we need to live and the need to share together of his incredible gifts to us.

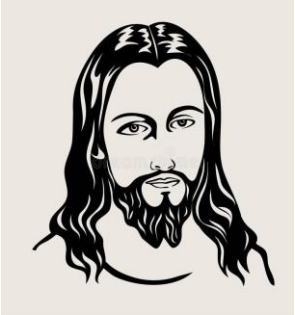
There was only one minor problem. God's creation was to be demonstrated by a model of the Solar system using inflatable appropriately coloured balls. But there were two missing from the set, the planets Earth and Pluto. Had I left them at home? Had I lost them on the way to church? Whatever had happened, they were simply not there. Fortunately, I had a much larger inflatable globe of the earth so was able to use that but had to ask the congregation to imagine one of two things about Pluto. First that it was so far away you could not see it or that the theory that Pluto is not a planet is true so I should not have a model of it in the first place.

Over the last few weeks, the Christian Church as a whole has been thinking about a number of parables that Jesus used about people having lost things. The Shepherd who lost one of his sheep and the woman who lost the precious coin come to my mind as they are very familiar stories. The point of those stories tell of the joy finding that which was lost. I think we have all experienced something of that when we have found something that was lost. Sometimes, it is just a deep sense of relief such as when you find your house keys or spectacles that have somehow been mislaid. Other times there is a real sense of joy at finding something that is a treasure or has a special meaning for you. Sometimes, we may not have realised these things have been lost for we may have forgotten all about them in the turbulence of modern life pushing so much into the background of our minds. The joy is especially powerful when something that you though lost for ever is found in unexpected places. I had so many photographs of my eldest children's early lives destroyed in Hurricane Gilbert in 1988 when the Manse was destroyed. It was truly amazing years later to discover a packet of photographs containing copies of many of those that had been lost kept by another member of the family.

Many years ago now, when I first came into the Methodist Ministry I was reminded that I needed to have a visiting card to hand out with my contact details on so that people were able to contact me or that I could post through a person's door if they were not in when I called to visit them. This was in the days before everyone had telephones and emails and Whatsapp.

It was suggested that I used a message on the card to proclaim the Christian Faith. I had no idea where the idea came from but the idea I chose was to have my contact details on one

side and a picture of Christ on the other with this saying which was anonymous but had left a deep impression on me. Here is an impression of what the card looked like.



If you don't know me, You have lost nothing. If you don't know Jesus, You have lost everything.

This was all in black and white for this was a long time before colour printing was commonly and cheaply available.
For me, the message was very important as it expresses the central message of the Christian faith.

Jesus is like the pearl of great price, precious for so many reasons. He is at the centre of our faith, hope and love, the dynamics by which we live. He is a real person with whom we can have a real relationship, heart to heart. I can think back to some tremendous people with whom I have journeyed from time to time with whom I have lost contact with. And there is a sadness there of having lost that relationship as they meant so much for the time we were together. It has been a particular joy for me to meet up again with so many of these friends as I have researched my family history.

Week by week, we come to Church to worship, to pray, to sing and to listen to God's word. Sometimes, as a preacher, I feel that I might be the main course at the dinner table for many people, the points of my sermon being dissected and chewed over.

And for many, coming to Church has become a habit rather than wanting to meet with a friend. I wonder whether you feel that Jesus has receded somewhat into the distance rather than being the friend who is there in Church with you. The relationship with him is in danger of being lost in all of the other things that has to be done on a Sunday or other days.

One of the most joyful moments is the moment you meet a friend who has been found again.

I encourage you to find Jesus again, to bring him back into your life as that precious friend who you want to share everything with. He has a wonderful ear to listen, a quiet calming voice to guide and a Spirit with which to energise and encourage you to do great things together.

You may feel that you may lose out if you do. The exact opposite is so true when you reach out.

Last Saturday, as a tradition says, I lost a daughter in marriage but in losing her, I gained a new family.





When we reach out to Jesus, we will gain so much more. God bless, Phyl