



## Lost and found

While running errands last week, I discovered that I had misplaced my favorite cloth face mask.

First I scoured the interior of my car. Not there. Then I pawed through the packages in the trunk. Not there either.

Unwilling to accept the inevitable, I went through the car a second time, certain my mask had only been hiding and this time it would magically reappear.

Nope.

I loved everything about that mask and I'm not ashamed to admit that I didn't take losing it easily. I felt unsettled, genuinely bothered that I had no idea where it had wound up.

I even grieved a little, imagining it lying in a parking lot somewhere, dirty now and forsaken. Ten days later, I'm still sad my mask is lost.

This experience has gotten me wondering if what I'm feeling doesn't hint at what God must feel when you and I go missing. How God's heart must break when we are lost a little or a lot.

This musing about God's experience reminds me that



### Pastor's Perspective

By Rev. Karen Winkel

Jesus told a number of memorable stories about valuable things that went missing. Perhaps you remember Jesus' parable about a shepherd who leaves his flock of 99 to go in search of the one sheep who ran off or was scared away.

Jesus also told a story about a poor widow who misplaces a precious small coin and then sweeps and sweeps and sweeps her humble home until at last she finds it — and when she does, she throws a party.

And of course there's the highly relatable parable of the father whose impulsive, petulant younger son takes off with his portion of the family inheritance; while the

son is away at length making his unwise choices, the father watches the horizon like a hawk.

The moment he spies the faint outline of his son headed home he hikes up his robe and races down the road, welcoming his long-lost son home with kisses, forgiveness, and a reunion feast.

Sometimes we lose what we love. A job. A relationship. An identity. And sometimes that what is a who — like the friend whose brother left home 40 years ago and is still lost to his family.

No matter the hows and the whys surrounding what's been lost, God suffers with us because, as Jesus' stories make plain, ours is a God who is well acquainted with losing what — and who — is precious.

Even the best of us become lost to God from time to time. We lose interest in prayer. We become preoccupied with our careers or get caught up in dead-end family dramas.

We harbor resentments or nurse grudges and in the process are lost to God and

the people who love us.

God grieves these occasions just as fully as God grieves those times when God's own have lost themselves to weighty realities like substance abuse, infidelity, entrenched hatred or conspiracy theories.

Jesus told stories about something or someone being so lost that it seemed all hope was lost, but his stories didn't end there. Instead, they drew to a close with happy reunions, wild celebrations even.

Now I've never lost a sheep, a treasured coin, or a son to indiscriminate living but I've lost a few things and people that mattered; I've even been lost a few times, too.

I find hope and help in being reminded by Jesus' stories that while God knows plenty about losing, God knows even more about seeking out and finding. My prayer is that this help and hope find its way to you, as well.

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