

One of the things I dread is losing my keys or my phone. Tracing the phone can be easy enough

Now losing the keys, that can be a different situation – you know the scene, you are heading out the door, possibly a bit late and you reach for the keys. ‘Have you seen my keys?’

‘Where did you put them?’

‘If I knew where I had put them I wouldn’t be asking where they are.’

‘No need to shout – I was only trying to help.’

So to try and preserve peace and harmony in the house, now, whenever I come back into the house the keys always go onto a particular shelf in the – well nearly always.

So why am I looking for my keys? There’s a simple answer to that – they are important to me. So if I lose them, I have to search until I find them.

Searching until I find them – that is what the shepherd leaving behind the 99 was doing as he headed off in search of the one that was lost. That is what the woman was doing as she upended her house in search of the lost coin. There was an urgency to that search – the lost sheep, the lost coin were important, they were valued and their recovery was an excuse for a party.

Sheep, the keeping of sheep, was very important to many of the people who would have been coming to listen to Jesus. They would have known what it was to lose a sheep and how difficult it could be to find it. In John's Gospel we read of Jesus describing himself as the Good Shepherd and he tells his disciples:

He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. *John 10:3,4*

The shepherd knows his sheep and the sheep recognize the shepherd, recognize his voice.

There are not many shepherds around the hill of Howth – but I've something here to do with the keys I have lost. If I go to my phone – find the right app – press find – does anyone hear anything?

The phone if you like is calling out for my keys – this tag on my key ring recognized the call and answered – so I can now get into my house, I can now drive my car.

Jesus used the story of people searching for something that was precious to them as an illustration of God searching for us. Like the lost sheep in the story we may wander off, get caught up in lots of things – not all of these are bad, our sports, our careers – and something goes missing in our life.

But God is on the look out for us, he never gives up looking because we are special to him. As one who tried avoiding God for many a year, you can take it from me – he never gives up. Our Collect of the Day for next Sunday is based

on a prayer by another man who kept avoiding God, St Augustine. He drove his Mum to despair with some of the friends he hung around with, some of the bad habits he developed – but nothing seemed to make him happy, He knew about the God his Mum worshipped but one day he knew God had found him and he found a peace in his heart. Out of this experience we have this prayer:

Almighty God,  
you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:  
Teach us to offer ourselves to your service,  
that here we may have your peace,  
and in the world to come may see you face to face;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Collect of Trinity 17 – next Sunday*

Remember God loves each and every one of us with a love that never gives up.  
Let us this coming week respond to that love in our love for one another.