

Lost and Found

A Dialogue Sermon for Sunday Morning Worship
by Rev. Ruth and Jenny Brummund
Homeless Awareness Weekend
United Congregational Church of Westerly, UCC
January 20, 2019 – 2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Text: Luke 2:41-52

Note: This appears in outline form because this is what worked best for Jenny and me as we put this together. Of necessity, this sermon will be more spontaneous and “in the moment” which is why this is not a manuscript, per se, but it should still provide at least a guide for what we intend the message for this morning to be.

Opening words of explanation

➤ Rev. Ruth:

- Welcome!
- Intent of this weekend; irony of change of plans needed on Saturday due to the weather – we could make adjustments to our situation but the homeless can't
- Our intent for this weekend & this morning's message – recognizing and working to alleviate homelessness is in fact a mandate from Jesus Christ. As Christians this is what we are called to do.
- *Jenny, how does this fit with your thoughts on homelessness from your very personal perspective?*

➤ Jenny:

- Some introductory comments offered
- *Jenny: Rev. Ruth, why is the biblical text the one you chose for us to reflect on this morning? What insights does it offer about homelessness?*

Biblical background and connections to the topic:

➤ Rev. Ruth:

- Intrigued by these two stories – last week’s and this one – about Jesus as a child/young boy
 - This story about Jesus, Mary & Joseph offers a touchpoint between our lives today and their lives 2000 years ago.
 - It raises important questions for us to consider.
 - Mary & Joseph lost track of Jesus so easily! How could that happen?
 - When they finally find him in the Temple after three days of looking for him everywhere, Jesus is genuinely confused that they thought he was lost. Mary chews him out for making them worry. Jesus responds by saying, why didn’t you know I would be here in my Father’s house?
 - This story is intended to show that even as a youth, Jesus had an awareness of who he was to God and what he needed to do; this was something even his own parents didn’t understand.
 - So, to answer your question, Jenny, what intrigues me about this biblical text and its connection to homelessness is what it invites us to consider about what it means to be lost and found.
 - *How does this story connect to your thoughts about homeless this morning, Jenny?*
- Jenny: “It reminds me of a dream ...”
- Jenny shares several anecdotes to acquaint folks with Jesse and his story
- Rev. Ruth: “I can see from your stories, Jenny, that there must be times when Jesse feels lost. Would you agree?”
- Jenny responds.
- Rev. Ruth: “And how about you, Jenny. As Jesse’s sister, do you sometimes feel lost too?”

Lost and Found

- From all that you've said, Jenny, it seems to me that as one becomes lost in the quagmire of homelessness, it must be very difficult to hold on to hope of being found.
 - In the story from Luke, we hear Jesus tell his parents, in front of the Temple leaders and teachers he had been talking with, that he was not lost and had never been lost. They might not have known where he was but he did. He knew who he was, where he was, why he was there; he was genuinely confused by their anger over him being "lost."
 - I think that's an important consideration for us to look at a little more deeply.
 - Jesus did not consider himself lost, even though his parents did. He didn't lose himself.
 - Similarly, this makes me think that when we think about homeless folks as somehow "lost" we are doing them an injustice. They are not lost and have never been lost. They know who they are, where they are, how they got there. What they lack is a home and a life that reflects the full humanity gifted to them by God, just as God gifted us with life. The homeless are beloved of God, equally, with us. They are not a problem to be solved. They are people struggling for a whole host of reasons.
 - So, for me, Jenny, I find myself wondering how we can move forward together, the homeless and the home-blessed, to work together to alleviate this situation? Another way of saying this might be to ask how we shift our emphasis away from the homeless as chronically lost to seeing them as folks searching for ways to find themselves, to move from homeless to home-blessed?
 - What are your thoughts on this, Jenny?

➤ Jenny's responses

Conclusion

- Rev. Ruth: So perhaps a place for our work on this issue to begin is prayerfully consider a few important ideas raised this morning:

- #1 – The situation of homelessness does not determine someone’s value to God in any way
- #2 – Jesus’ command to care for the least of these is totally unambiguous; the poor and the homeless are NOT lost. They are often victims of circumstances beyond their control. Yes, sometimes they make big mistakes and poor choices but none of that determines their value to God. To God they are always FOUND. When we can see them as found, and not hopelessly lost, the way forward will become clearer.
- *Do you have any final thoughts on all this, Jenny?*

➤ Jenny:

- Anecdote about Jesse’s recent miracle and how it reveals the miracles always possible, even for the homeless

➤ Rev. Ruth: Connection to mercy – God’s mercy for the homeless and the home-blessed – Jesus needs us to see the homeless as beloved of God just like us even as we set aside judgement of them, replacing it with a willingness to forgive. It is this that will lead to justice for all, and the first steps of resolving this chronic and painful issue.

- *Any final words for us, Jenny?*

➤ Jenny:

Rev. Ruth & Jenny: Thanks so much for your attention and consideration this morning! Please feel free to come to us with your questions and comments during Fellowship time this morning.