

Lost... Reward

You have probably seen an ad tacked up somewhere that says, "LOST." It goes on to describe a dog or cat, with a phone number to call if you spot it. Sometimes the notice ends with the word "REWARD." If you help the owner to reunite with his pet, the owner will give you a gift, probably cash. Who wouldn't help out in response to that offer? But most people would gladly help out the owner even without getting paid. There is a reward just in the satisfaction of bringing pet and owner together again.

Once in a while, it is not a pet who is lost, but a person. This time, there are multiple posters, larger and more urgent, with more details—when the person was last seen, what he was wearing, and so on. Again comes the word REWARD, often with a high dollar figure. That lost person is priceless to someone.

People—yes, people—get lost. Some become disoriented and wander off. Some walk away deliberately. Some explore too far and lose their way back. Some are the victims of foul play. In any case, something is drastically wrong. They are gone. They are not only lost, but in danger of staying lost, never to return.

The authorities are notified. Search and rescue teams head out. Families and sometimes communities are disrupted. Lost is a fearsome word. Jesus used the words lost and found to illustrate how welcome someone is when he is finally found again. (He was not the type to tell people to "get lost.") In Luke 15, He told of a father whose son walked out, headed for who-knows-where. The son was gone a long time. Was it months or was it years? At any rate, he finally ran aground, decided enough was enough, and headed home. Now get this: "*When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.*" Those words imply that his father had been watching for him all the while. What then? His father ran and embraced him!

According to an old story, a man traveling by train noticed that the young fellow sitting beside him looked troubled. He ventured to ask the young man about himself, and the young man confided that he had left home and lived a wild life, but had finally come to his senses. So he had written home, asking his parents if they would take him back. Not being sure of their welcome, he had written that if they wanted him, would they please hang a sheet from a window of their house facing the railroad track. If the sheet was there, he would get off at the local station. If the sheet was not there, he would stay on the train.

"Beyond the next curve is my home," he said, "but I can't bear to look. Would you look for me?"

Suddenly the man said, "Look! Look! Your mother must have ransacked the house looking for sheets. There are sheets at every window."

Such is God. Every time a sinner turns to Him, He gives that man or woman a glad welcome.

But let us not forget the man at the train window. Was he not rewarded to be able to tell the young man how welcome he was?

God Himself appreciates the help of anyone who points a sinner toward God. And how is this done? All kinds of ways. Some knock on doors. Some take in foster children. Some care for prison babies. Some

invite friends to summer Bible school. Some have church visitors home for lunch and make a follow-up phone call during the week. Some pack a bag with goodies and a Gospel paper for the homeless man at the end of the freeway ramp. Just two testimonies follow.

"From little things like cards or phone calls, to big things like putting up insulation or watching our children with little advance warning, people at church have made extra effort to reach out to us."

"It is my testimony that those . . . Christians did a good job of loving me into church membership and practicing what they preached. God bless you all!"

There is no greater reward than seeing people moving toward God.

~David L Martin