

I hope you all had a good summer. And I hope school's going well, now that you're back.

I guess it's a bit early in the term for you to have lost anything at school yet - I hope so! - but I expect your school has somewhere for Lost Property, doesn't it? And I guess it won't be very long before the 'Lost Property' box at your school is running over, like this one.

Show them the Lost Property box.

Let's see what we can find in it. Who'd like to have a look?

Pick children, one by one, to choose things from the box. Comment on each item.

E.g.

A shoe! How on earth can a person lose *one* shoe? How did they get home, in just one shoe?

A pair of glasses. I hope this person doesn't need these glasses for driving, or to do their homework. People who wear glasses really need them, don't they?

A bear. Oh dear. I bet someone, somewhere, is really missing this bear.

An earring. Just one earring. I wonder if this is someone's favourite. I guess the other earring is a bit useless without it.

A woolly jumper. Maybe the person who lost this isn't too worried right now, but when winter comes I bet they'll wish they had this jumper.

Put your hand up if you've ever lost anything that was really important to you.

What did you do?

Take answers.

When we lose something really important, we don't just say, "Oh well, no problem. I can always get another one.", do we? We look and look in the hope of finding what we've lost. We search in the same places over and over again, in the faint hope that we might have missed it the last time we looked. We keep on looking until we find it.

Jesus told a story about a man who lost one of his sheep. Let's listen to it now.

Someone reads The Lost Sheep, using e.g. Lion Big Bible Stories or Mick Inkpen or Children's Bible version.

Sheep aren't the brightest animals, are they? When they wander off, they can't always find their way back home. But, as Jesus said, a good shepherd will always go looking for his lost sheep. Every sheep matters to him.

Jesus said that God's like that, too. He said that we're like the sheep, and God is like the good shepherd who looks after us. He loves every one of us. Every person matters to him.

When we stay close to him, and listen to his voice, and trust him to look after us, it makes him really happy.

When we wander away from him, and stop listening to him, and try to do things on our own instead of trusting him, it makes him sad.

But he never gives up on us. Like a good shepherd, he never stops looking for us. And the minute he finds us - the minute we turn back to him - he's so happy that it's like there's a party in heaven.

No matter how we've messed up, God always loves us. Because Jesus died on the cross and rose again, God always forgives us. And every time we ask him, he sends his Holy Spirit to help us to change and to try again.

So let us pray.

Father God,

Thank you for sending Jesus to show us how much you love us.

Thank you for forgiving us when we mess up.

Thank you that you never give up on us, even when we're close to giving up on ourselves.

Please send your Holy Spirit to guide and protect us, and to keep us close to you.

We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Many thanks to www.sermons4kids.com for the idea behind this talk.