

LOST, PART 1 - LOST AND AFRAID

Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

2 Corinthians 4:4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

Perhaps you've heard about the current award-winning TV series, LOST. We're not here to promote it, because it has all the junk and trappings of Hollywood like most of the other TV offerings out there. However, we are here to ask this question: "Why does a series like 'Lost' resonate so clearly with such a large audience?" It's not like this is the first time ...

From classic literature like Swiss Family Robinson and Robinson Crusoe to long-running comedies like Gilligan's Island to modern films like Castaway, there has always been a certain fascination with the scenario of people being stranded somewhere through no fault of their own. Lost in a place where their surroundings are full of danger and uncertainty. Lost in a place where, regardless of who else is around, every day is preoccupied with two all-consuming passions ... I must survive, and I must find a way to be rescued.

Now we even have "reality TV" (now there's an oxymoron!) to demonstrate this universal human fascination with "lostness" through shows like "Survivor." The rules of the game are simple: a group of several average people are abandoned in the middle of some of the most unforgiving places on earth. At first, they are divided into two teams that compete and eliminate one member each week (remember the catchphrase, "voted off the island?"). But then, halfway through the game, it becomes every man for himself; the illusion of helping teammates is gone. The changing dynamic of trust and betrayal among the players kept viewers talking and arguing for weeks. The game is simple and cruel all at the same time: Outwit, Outplay, Outlast. Kind of sounds like how we compete in our everyday lives, doesn't it?

And now along comes "LOST." Oceanic Air flight 815 tears apart in midair and crashes on a Pacific island. Stripped of everything, its survivors are forced into a vicious cycle of survival against the cruel weather and harsh terrain. They discover that the island holds many mysterious and dangerous secrets, not the least of which is wondering if those they are marooned with may turn against them at any moment!

Some panic. Some pin all their hopes on rescue. Some retaliate against others. Some fall into isolation and depression. A few find inner strength they never knew they had. The characters seem familiar, almost like people we should know ...

- a young singer who has wrecked his career due to a drug addiction
- a couple who feels isolated because they are of a different race
- a woman who desperately tries to hide her criminal past
- a father and son who have never really gotten to know each other
- a nice guy who does his best to help everyone else
- a soldier who is haunted by his sadistic cruelty to others in the past
- a reckless drifter who instinctively mistrusts those around him
- a wealthy young woman whose world revolves only around herself
- a workaholic who has never been able to get his father's approval

Just a TV show, right? But is real life all that different? Sometimes we feel stranded and alone, and we desperately hope that someone will come and rescue us. Sometimes we deal with anger, wondering why God lets bad stuff happen in our lives. Sometimes we are ashamed of the things we've done, and we're not sure if forgiveness is even possible.

We feel LOST ... and being "lost" in any way is our deepest fear.

Producer J.J. Abrams said: "If 'Lost' works at all, it's because the audience and the characters want to know the answers to the same questions. The mysteries that we're grappling with while watching the show are the same ones they're grappling with."

We use the word "lost" as a **verb** in a thousand casual ways every day – he lost his keys, she lost her job, he lost his wife, she lost her temper, they lost the game, we lost the contract. But we more commonly use it as an **adjective**, to describe what it means and how it feels to be lost ...

- Unable to find the way – a lost child.
- No longer under someone's care – a lost pen.
- Wasted – lost youth.
- No longer practiced – a lost art.
- Beyond reach – a lost expedition.
- Squandered – a lost opportunity.
- Not likely to win – a lost battle
- Distracted – lost in thought.
- Bewildered – I'm lost.
- **Beyond redemption – a lost soul.**

Does that last definition haunt you? It should ... because either you are lost, or you know someone who is. Not lost on an island, but for eternity.

Jesus came to seek and to save the LOST. That was His mission; he talked about it constantly. In Luke 15, he even told a trilogy of stories about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son ... just so people could grasp how eternally important this is.

Luke 15:4-7 ⁴ What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? ⁵ And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. ⁷ I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Do you know why these stories were told? Because a group of religious people were upset that Jesus was trying to relate to sinners! They were not concerned that others were lost, only that they were no longer the center of Jesus' attention.

Luke 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

There are many verses in the Bible comparing humanity to sheep ...

- 2 Chronicles 18:16 – sheep that have no shepherd
- Psalm 23:1 – the Lord is my shepherd
- Psalm 100:3 – we are the sheep of his pasture
- Isaiah 40:11 – he shall feed his flock like a shepherd
- Isaiah 53:6 – all we like sheep have gone astray
- Jeremiah 23:1 – woe to those who scatter the sheep
- Ezekiel 34:5 – sheep scattered because there is no shepherd
- Ezekiel 34:6 – sheep wandered through all the mountains
- Ezekiel 34:11 – I will search for my sheep and seek them out

Matthew 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

1 Peter 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Sheep have the habit of getting lost, but they never seem to be able to find their way back home – just like us. They have to be sought, found and brought back time after time – just like us. They are pitiful when they are lost, because they cannot really defend themselves – just like us. And they are afraid – just like us. We all fear something ... failure, death, embarrassment, the problems of the future, the shame of the past, the opinions of others, whatever. **We are lost ... and we are afraid ...**

Jesus' story should haunt you ... because either you are lost, or you know someone who is. Not lost on an island, but lost for eternity.

Quite often, and for a variety of reasons, churches become like a sheepfold ... a place that is comfortable, familiar, and safe. In fact, we come to believe that this is the sum total of the shepherd's job ... to keep us comfortable, meet our needs, and protect us from any and all harm.

But what we have not taken into account is the heart of a shepherd! The same compassion that drove him to rescue US still drives him to rescue OTHERS. His attention is constantly distracted by the shrill cries for help from those that are still LOST. The sheep in the fold may be unhappy with this preoccupation, but they will never change it. In fact, if your pastor seems to constantly focus on reaching the lost, to the near exclusion of babysitting the saved, you should thank God – because he has the real heart of a shepherd!

LOST PEOPLE MATTER TO GOD, AND THEY MUST MATTER TO US!

Matthew 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Can you imagine how uncomfortable a sheep would be in the midst of wolves? But that's exactly where Jesus sends His church – out into the world to reach for those who are lost! It's not familiar, it's not comfortable, and it's definitely not safe ... but it IS the Great Commission!

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

John 20:21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

It was Jesus who told us to leave the ninety-nine and look for the one. It was Jesus who said to keep looking until we find them. It was Jesus who said that one sinner repenting causes more excitement in Heaven than all our great services, conferences and campmeetings put together.

ARE YOU LOST? No sense of direction. No familiar landmarks. You don't know how to get home, because you don't know where you are. A map serves little help if you do not know the starting point. You can look at a map and see where you THINK you are and where you want to go, but until you KNOW where you are, you will not be able to get where you need to go. **The good news is that the starting point is repentance.**

ARE YOU AFRAID? Jesus' most common command was "Fear Not!" Why? Because as you begin your journey home you'll find real peace.