

36. *Lost to the Phantoms of Imagination*

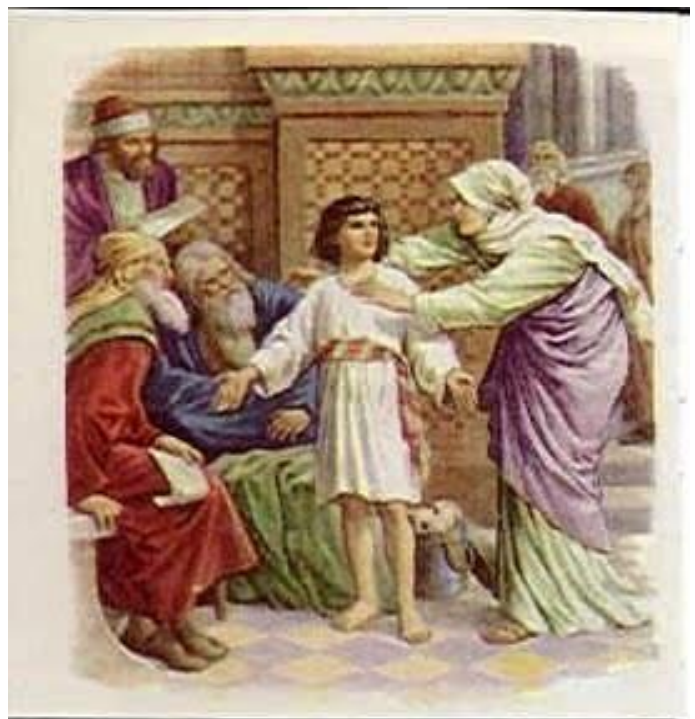
If you have ever lost your own child or a student in your care, you will not quickly forget the high level of anxiety that you experienced. A child with you on an excursion can't be found, a runner in your school cross country race doesn't cross the finish line, a student has gone AWOL from campus. These are typical predicaments educators face. You start to imagine awful scenarios in the absence of evidence that they are safe. Your heart races, you pray earnestly, but still feel powerless and alarmed. You dread contacting the parents, and after them, the police. So you delay some more, hoping for a positive outcome. But the faces of the staff members who know your situation mirror your fears. In dreadful moments like these we perceive the true value of the lost individual. They are *so* precious-their misdemeanours and shortcomings fade. The valued student is now perceived with the lens that Jesus uses, loved and valued as a person of inestimable worth. Mercifully, in most situations, the student is found. You are so relieved, that the imposition of sanctions seems almost perfunctory.

This experience of loss was something that Joseph and Mary experienced when the youthful Jesus was lost in the pressing crowds, and he was lost for several days! Like us, they would have prayed themselves dry and had sleepless nights in petition. Perhaps they blamed each other, and had that matter to resolve too, while they searched outside and within the metropolis.

Let's not wait till a crisis comes, to value and affirm each and every student and staff member. Even the more demanding nuisance ones deserve recognition, for God has deliberately allowed the tapestry of shared lives that form about us, for Kingdom purposes.

*Open the eyes of my heart today Lord,
so that I see every student as being of
great value, just as you do. So valuable
that they are worth dying for.*

Luke 2:42-50 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. **43** After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. **44** Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. **45** When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. **46** After



three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **47** Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. **48** When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? **Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you**"

Matthew 10:6 & 7⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'

Luke 15:4 – 7 Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.