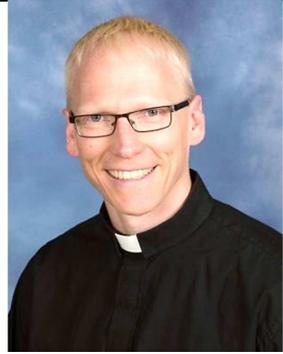


The Parable of the Lost Key

I realized it on a Tuesday morning when I was about to leave for the gym. My key to the van was not on the hook where it was “supposed” to be. I was immediately confused. I rarely lose things, and I have a pattern of putting things “in the right spot.” It was early in the morning, so I took the car and resigned myself to looking later when the household was awake to help (and be questioned).



Wouldn't you know it; no one had even seen my key. It was just one gray key on an orange key chain from my last triathlon! Where could it be? I scoured the house. Perhaps it got knocked off a counter before I could hang it up. Did I happen to walk around the house with it? I checked the floors and under the furniture. I checked my dresser and all the pockets of all the pants and coats I had recently worn. No key. It was lost. I prayed “Oh God, you know where my key is. Would you tell me? Would you lead me to it?” I wonder how many such prayers God hears these days, especially about keys, glasses, and cellphones.

I re-traced my steps. I had last used it on Sunday, when I took the family to worship. But I didn't drive the van home from church; we'd switched vehicles. (Don't even try to wrap your mind around Sunday mornings in our household.) Maybe it was still at the church building. I searched my desk and my office. I searched the whole building, actually. What if it was in my hand as I was cleaning up after worship? I talked with our staff, in case anyone had seen it. Maybe it got knocked off my desk and into the trash. I asked our custodian Kenny if he noticed it. No sign of it.

On that Sunday evening, the last day I knew I had my key, we had taken the van to the pool in Oregon for family swim. Did I take the key then? I couldn't remember. So I called the pool; they checked their lost and found for me. No key. The next Sunday, when we went to swim again, to be sure, I looked through their lost and found for myself. Nothing. (But people sure do lose a lot of things!) One last time I talked with my kids. “Have you seen my key? Were you playing with it?” The search was cold.

I finally gave up. Only God knew where my key was, and I was not going to find it by force of sheer will. There was nothing more I could do.

It can be hard to let something go. Whether it's a lost key or an old grudge. Whether it's a dream that cannot be, or a critical comment that's stuck in your brain. **What might God be inviting you to let go of as we enter this New Year?** Maybe you need to let go of unhealthy expectations for yourself. Maybe you need to let go of unfair judgements of others. Maybe you need to let go of worries or doubt. It's easy for these kinds of things to rob us of the peace that God has for us every day. A simple prayer mantra – “let go and let God” – can help us rely on our faith and restore our peace. It's a way we invite God to do God's work in us when we realize we can't do it on our own. Sometimes the best thing we can do is to let go and give up our illusion of control.

God, on the other hand, refuses to let go... *of us*. Jesus told parables about a lost coin, a lost sheep, and a lost son in order to reveal the truth about God's relentless pursuit of you and me. Sure enough, we are the lost “key” more often than we realize. We go astray. We wander from God. But God will never give up on us. God will not stop searching for us until God has found us and we are safely home. Even now, God is seeking you out. God is longing to find you, every day, and bring you into God's embrace. In letting go, we let God find us. There is no greater thing than to be found in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9).



After a few weeks of suffering the loss of my key, I finally let go and decided to have a new key made. That very day, my son was in the kitchen to get a plastic sack from the “bag holder” that hangs by our key hooks. “Your van key!” It had fallen not 5 inches from where it was supposed to be. The lost was found as I let go.

Letting go, letting God,

Pastor Matthew Lock

“I once was lost,
but now am found.”
-John Newton,
Amazing Grace