##  Today we commemorate the 15th anniversary of 9/11. We not only remember those who perished on that date but also those who put their lives on the line in order to s7ve others. Instead of scattering and running “away” from the billow of dust and smoke from Ground Zero, hundreds of firefighters, police officers, and EMT rushed to the scene in hope to save those who may be lost or trapped while desperately crying out to be rescued. Their bravery and courage were admirable and their sacrifices shall be honored and remembered.

##  In addition to the many lives who were saved by those heroic emergency responders, there was one more that was saved. The Surviving Tree [as you see here] was salvaged in the midst of the rubbles. The recovery workers decided to salvage this tree, nourished it and later on re-planted next to the memorial reflection pool at the former footprint of the tower. To this date, it continues to flourish and serve as a symbol of hope that life must continue even in the midst of horrific tragedy and even death.

Some may ask, *where is God in the midst of all of this, or even if there is a God at all? Couldn’t God have prevented such notorious act of evil from happening? How could a merciful God remain silent when the people were so desperately crying out for help?*

But the truth is, God was not silent on that day. God did hear us. God was with us then 15 years ago, as he is with us now. God did rise to the occasion and calmed the storms of our fears, just as the surviving tree withstood the impact of the collapse and remains standing tall today. And as we talked about last week, God continues to serve as the potter who molds us and shapes us into the person whom God has destined us to be, in fulfilling God’s purpose. Even days, months and years after, God is still actively healing and consoling those whose hearts were shattered and lives that have been forever changed. God has indeed heard our cries and has delivered God’s grace and mercy to us in the midst of trials and challenges.

 As the Apostle Paul shared with the church in Corinth, **“*So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.[[1]](#footnote-1)*** “***God’s grace is sufficient for us, for power is made perfect in weakness."***

Right before the scripture that we read earlier in Psalm 13, the Psalmist David was pleading for God’s intervention in the midst of a desperate situation and outcry. God appeared to be silent and was nowhere to be found. David expressed his anger and frustration at God for His presence (or lack thereof), especially during times of trials. ***How long, O God? Have you forgotten all about me? How long will you hide your face from me?*** asked the Psalmist.

 Based on the Psalmist’s exasperation, we could get a sense of how alienated his relationship may have been with God at the time. But in spite of that, the Psalmist never forgot that there was still a God whom he can turn to. God is still a sovereign God, still in control of all things both good and evil. God’s faithfulness remained steadfast even in spite of our human lack of faith and infidelity.

 As a shepherd boy, David could imagine himself to be like a lost sheep seeking to be found and waiting to be rescued by God. But he remained as one of the flock under God’s care. God still cared to save this “one” out of many.

 Through prayers we can express our feelings and direct our personal concerns to God. We pray that God would help us regain our right perspective and grant us peace in the midst of our storms and trials. Unfortunately, we have become defiant and angry towards God, especially when things do not go according to OUR ways. We’ve blamed God for all the calamity and misfortunes in life, while neglecting to count God’s blessing each day. We’ve fallen astray and become lost while refusing to be found and be rescued by God.

 In the Gospel lesson that we read earlier from Luke, using the parable of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, Jesus shared a message of “Lost & Found” with a group of tax collectors and among other “sinner”, including the Pharisees and the scribes. Why bother wasting time in searching for the lost one when there are 99 more? What’s 1 out of 99? Doesn’t the need of many (or the majority) outweighs that of a few? The primary focus of this parable was not about the 99, but the One…the one that is lost and deserves to be found. Just like the penny that was left on the floor earlier, most people would simply bypass and ignore the penny and unwilling to spend time with it.

Jesus was telling this parable not just to the scribes and the Pharisees, but those who are marginalized and ostracized from the community – the tax-collectors, prostitutes, and sinners, those who do not quite “fit” in our society. They are the lost sheep and the penny that no one wants and they’re in desperate need to be found. The reward of “saving one” is worth much more than the other 99, who express no remorse and no desire to repent and to be saved. **Jesus came NOT for those who are spiritually healthy but for those who are weak and suffering, but yearning for the truth of God’s saving grace.**

Jesus reached out to those who are crying out in silence. He touched upon those who are shunned from their community for speaking their mind and sharing their griefs and pains. God has heard their cries. God was willing to go the extra mile in order to save the one who is worthy at the expensive of the others. That’s how God demonstrates his unconditional love to us at all cost. *Surely there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

 In our brokenness we may shamefully find our way standing before God seeking forgiveness. We’re on the same page or having the same mind as God. This is the journey of God’s salvation and amazing rescue in our lives….for we have been lost but now are found. As one theologian put it so well, he said, “*Our seeking of God’s grace when we are lost is but our willingness to be found”.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

 The event that happened on this date has offered a whole new global perspective of how we see ourselves in relation with others (for better and for worse). On one hand, the nation may appear to be more united and strengthened in the midst of a national crisis, while on the other hand, it unveiled a whole new social façade of human fears, bias, and stereotypes against those who are “different” from us. This looming fear affects how we live our lives each day and how we interact socially with others.

 One thing we do know for sure though is that we are still living in a world of human sins and constant fears. Evil is still prevalent in our everyday lives and the road towards reconciliation and peace still has a way to go and a constant “work in progress” like a clump of clay in the hands of the potter.

 The human race is in a state of spiritual brokenness that is desperately in need of healing. Too many are still at lost not only physically, but spiritually and emotionally as well. Too many of the innocence are still suffering at the hands of human exploitation and power.

 As Christians we have an important obligation to fulfill as God’s transforming agents and ambassadors to this world. **God has commissioned us to look beyond the obvious, to seek out and to pray for those who are still trapped and buried in the spiritual rubbles, that one day, they too may be rescued.**

 **The parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin both conclude by calling together of friends and neighbors to** **join in the celebration[[4]](#footnote-4)**. **Invitation to this Heavenly celebration is NOT based upon one’s merits or accomplishments but rather upon God’s grace and mercy.**  There will always be room for one more at the table in this Heavenly feast of Thanksgiving.

 God grants us the grace to repent and allows us the opportunities to be found. The ultimate celebration and feast will not take place until all the lost have been found and all the sinners have repented and are saved. ***There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents****.[[5]](#footnote-5)* As one commentator summed up this passage so well by saying, “*True repentance happens when our minds are changed to such a degree that we cannot see a community as whole until all are included and found, and none are “lost”.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

 It is our prayer that God will continue to help us embrace those who repent. Enable us to build bridges, amend old and broken relationships, not only among ourselves but among those around us…so that one day all who are spiritually lost and emotionally trapped may be liberated and be found once again.

In the name of God, the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 15:7* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bader-Saye, Scott *Feasting on the Word, Year C Volume 4 P.70* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bader-Saye Scott *Feasting on the Word, Year C Volume 4 P.72* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Luke 15:7 and 10* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Nixon, G. Penny *Feasting on the Word, Year C Volume 4 P.73* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)