

LOST AND FOUND
2 Kings 22

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Some pretty important things can get misplaced sometimes. Think for a moment, "What is the most important item that you ever lost?"

When Maryland officials first took over the operation of Baltimore's city jail, some inmates just slipped their mind. In fact, they misplaced 114 inmates. One man spent 13 months behind bars on an arson charge because jailers thought he had already been released. These inmates had never been formally charged or assigned a court date. They were just lost – live men, lost like one might lose a sock and just forget about it.

The Suierveld family, unfortunately, lost their dear dog, Abby. One minute, they were playing with the one-year-old pup in the backyard of their Apollo, Pennsylvania home. The next minute, Abby ran off and went missing. They lost their dog! They searched far and wide, but eventually had to conclude that Abby was dead, because she was nowhere to be found. Surprise! Surprise! Ten years later, Abby showed up eight miles away from her owner's house and was taken to a shelter, where she was identified. The family would love to know where their dear dog had been for the last decade. They will never know, but the good news is once lost, Abby was finally found. A decade without their dog – but finally found.

It was all rolled up, a dusty roll of canvas laid there for 60 years. No one knew it was there. The heirs were simply rummaging through a warehouse following the death of Henri Matisse's son, Pierre. And there it was, a 1931 version of Henri Matisse's "La Danse." This initial version of the work had been rolled up by the artist himself and forgotten in the midst of creative frenzy. Estimated worth: 100 million francs (\$200,000).

Tischendorf was less than 30 years old, a lecturer at the University of Leipzig. By no means a distinguished professor. He was visiting the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai – it was 1844. He happened to see some leaves of a parchment in the trash can headed over to the monastery to stoke the fire. He recovered 43 pages of the LXX. A monk mentioned that two baskets full of such pages had already been burned up! He warned the monks that such ancient Scripture texts were too valuable to be used to start their fires. He would have no rest. What else might have been there. He went back to the monastery in 1853 to get more pages. But he had acted too excited about the earlier pages and the monks were cautious. They would tell him nothing. 1859 – he would still have no rest. He went back, showed the then new steward of the monastery what he had published from his earlier finding. The steward said, "That's nothing. I, too, have a copy of the Old Testament." There, before the astonished scholar's eyes, the monk went to his small cell and came out with a manuscript wrapped in red cloth. It was what had kept him up at night – they had not burned it – there was the treasure of a lifetime. A finding to alter Biblical scholarship forever. But

he could not act too excited. Remember, before his excitement had betrayed him. He asked, but he asked casually, if he might study it up in his room. He stayed up all night. He declared in his diary – it really seemed a sacrilege to sleep in the presence of this, the most important ancient copy of the Bible to be found. The Old Testament was there, the New Testament was there – in excellent condition.

With the bargaining skill of a sly used car salesman, Tischendorf offered to buy the M.S.S. If they would have asked, he would have cut off his right arm to obtain it. But nothing doing. Finally, he was allowed to copy it 8 pages at a time. At last, with political maneuvers and at the price of a silver shrine for St. Catherine – he was finally able to purchase the M.S.S. for the Czar of Russia. Later, after the revolution in Russia, when the USSR had no interest in God or the Bible, the British Museum purchased the M.S.S. at one half million in 1933.

What had once been used as rubbish to start fires had been valued at \$500,000 (\$12 million in 2024). It turned out to be the arguably most important New Testament manuscript of all times, Codex Sinaiticus. It has shaped the Bible in your hand if you use a modern version.

Wow! Such a jewel – God's word – neglected, lost, used as firewood.

No doubt about it, throughout history some pretty important things have been lost, have been neglected, have been just plain forgotten.

But never before has anything as important been lost, never before has a find been more life changing than the one that takes place in our text this morning.

The year was 638 B.C. Child King Josiah comes to the throne of Judah at the age of eight. Babylon was rising as a dominant world power. At the age of 26, the new king makes his first recorded independent act – he ordered the restoration of the temple. Josiah was a good king, his royal report card yields an A+.

The temple, God's House, had fallen into disrepair. Years of neglect. Josiah knows that this is God's House; His House should not be falling apart. Go call the masons, the carpenters, buy stone and timber. God's House had been neglected, true worship of God had been neglected. In fact, save for the prophetic voices of Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Nahum – nobody really knew what God was saying. I'm not sure anyone really cared. But Josiah called for the offerings to be spent repairing the temple.

As the ancient workers began repair on the long-neglected temple, they made a once-in-a-lifetime discovery.

V. 8

I have found the Book of the Law.

There had been no Scripture, no Word of God for 75 years. The 55-year reign of Manasseh and two-year reign of Amon and Josiah, from age 8 to 26 – total 75 years – there had been no Scripture for the people.

Jerusalem had been steeped in idolatry, worship at the temple had been neglected, God's Word had fallen to such neglect that no one even knew where the copy of Scriptures had been placed. Can you imagine that? The people of God without the Word of God.

Most of the copies – remember, no printing press – handmade copies of God's Law, were destroyed.

Perhaps a faithful priest had hidden the scroll of God's work in a secret chamber during the reign of a Godless king. Josephus believed that as the money was removed from the treasure chest, the Scripture was found in the bottom.

Perhaps it was the whole Torah that was found. Perhaps it was the book of Deuteronomy. Whatever portion it was – it was the Word of God for the people of God. It had been forgotten, it had been lost, they had not obeyed God's Word. They had been living their lives without the guidance of God's Word.

v. 8-9

Shaphan -- First took the Book and read it for himself. God's Word, lost for so long. You have to wonder upon discovering the Word of God - which portion did he read first?

v. 10-11

The Word of the almighty God had been lost for 75 years and now Shaphan says, "Hey, we doled out the money like you asked. We found a book." And he reads God's Word, God's guidance.

Perhaps he read the portions of the law that warn of the curses and threats against those who transgressed it. Josiah had an anguish of the soul – he tore his clothes. Perhaps the king had never ever heard the Word of God read before now. His grandfather and father had been godless men.

v. 13

Inquire of the Lord for me – go find a Godly interpreter who explains what God's Word means.

A group, a delegation goes to Huldah, a prophetess.

Josiah himself was spared calamities, but the nation was to be judged.

They had lost the Word of God for 75 years.

Can you imagine a world without Scripture?

Some here this morning have lost the Book. Just as the children of Israel lost the Book through neglect, so have you, so has your family.

It happened little by little, week by week, failing to make Sunday morning Bible Study an emphasis in your life – failing to gather with God's people to study His Word – you have slowly – it happened to Israel slowly as well – lost the Book!

I. Without the Book, we have no guidelines for life.

Without the Scriptures, how do we pretend to know how to do life?

Without a tape measure, how do you lay out a square foundation?

Without a level, how do you build a straight wall?

Without a pattern, how do you sew a garment to form?

The Bible is valuable because it tells us how to do life.

Without the Bible, what is wrong? What is right?

What does God expect?

Take away the prophetic proclamation, "Thus says the Lord," and how do you know what God desires?

Josiah and his people had lived without the Book and when at last the Book was found, they realized that without the guide they had missed the mark, wandered in their walk. They were not living as God would have them to live.

Ours is a call to know, to study the Book. We try to facilitate the studying of the Bible so you will know how to do life.

I cannot imagine how people attempt to do life without the Scripture. I want to know, "God, what are you saying to me? What do you expect from me? How do you desire me to live?"

I have a dreadful fear of, in the end, having God say you missed it. You had one chance at life – to do life right – and you missed it. So I study His Book - that I might do life right. So that I'll know in which direction to head.

The utterance of God – men and women are called to hear what God has to say to them. I want to be confronted with the declaration from God.

God's Word stands forever. Isaiah 40:8

"The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the Word of our God stands forever."

God's Word is God's Word. You cannot destroy it; I cannot adequately defend it. But it makes no difference.

Trying to destroy or defend the Word of God is like having two men push with toothpicks on opposite sides of the Rock of Gibraltar. While one is trying to push it over with his toothpick, the other is trying to hold it up with his. The rock is going to stay firm regardless of what either man does! (*Illustrations for Bible Preaching*, Michael Green)

God's Word has spoken, it cannot be taken back or rescinded. It is.

By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host (Psalm 33:6).

It is the guide by which to do life.

Psalm 119:105

Thy word is a lamp to my feet,
and a light to my path.

As the traveler upon the dark path needs a light to guide his very next step., so you and I, as we walk through a dark world, need God's Word, the Book, to guide us each step of the way.

To the troubled, it is a word of comfort.
To the ignorant, it is a word of wisdom.
To the learned, it is a call for humility.
To the sinner, it is a door to salvation.
To the doubting, it is a dose of assurance.

Without God's Word, we cannot know how to do life.

In contrast to Robert Fulghum (author of *All I really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*), Robert Hostetler says that he acquired all his truly essential knowledge in Sunday School. It was there that he learned not only the basic rules of good behavior, but the reason for trying to be good. The songs and stories he heard there taught him (1) the greatness of God ("My God Is So Big"), (2) the love of Jesus ("Jesus Loves Me"); (3) the fact that God's love transcends racial and cultural barriers ("Jesus Loves the Little Children"), (4) the importance of God's Word as a guide to life ("The B-I-B-L-E"), and (5) the imperative of sharing God's love with others ("This Little Light of Mine"). ("All I really need to know I learned in Sunday School" by Robert Hostetler, Sept. 1990)

God's word is always a community word. In Deuteronomy 6, the Shema ("Hear . O Israel!) or at Pentecost in Acts 2 where the people are gathered ("Listen to my words...").

II. Without the Book, we are just in the sea of subjectivity.

What may be reasonable to man in India may be absurd in France.

What may be okay in America may be outlandish in Iran.

Without the Book there is no absolute truth. Nothing that is always true for all people at all times.

Instead, we are filled with opinion, intuition; we are lost in a sea of subjectivity.

"Each man trying to find the truth that is right for him."

Surely reasonable people can decide to behave in a reasonable way, without the Bible?

The most educated nation in history, the very soil which (in part) gave birth to the enlightenment, tried to live without God, without God's Book.

Ravi Zacharias, the author of *Can Man Live Without God*, writes:

A few years ago, when I was speaking in Poland, I was taken to the Nazi death camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau. I shall never be the same. Many, many times in silence I have reflected upon my first visit there, where the words of Hitler envisioning a generation of young people without a conscience are aptly hung on a wall, grimly reminding the visitor of the hell unleashed when his goal was realized.

I freed Germany from the stupid and degrading fallacies of conscience and morality... We will train young people before whom the world will tremble. I want young people capable of violence – imperious, relentless and cruel.

The Nazi exterminators lived without the Book. In all of its education and reasonable sources by which to do life, Germany could not see the immorality of Hitler. Other stories are comparable: Stalin, Mussolini, Mao.

Without the Bible we are lost in the sea of subjectivity.

Men cannot by themselves decide what is right.

God must set the immutable standard.

III. Without the Book, there is no meaning to life.

The Book answers all of life's questions.

- Where do we come from?
- Why are we here?
- Where are we going?

In *Life Magazine*, Jose Martinez, a taxi driver, looks to himself – not to God's Book – and he writes,

We're here to die, just live and die. I live driving a cab. I do some fishing, take my girl out, pay taxes, do a little reading, then get ready to drop dead. You've got to be strong about it. Life is a big fake. Nobody gives a darn. You're rich or you're poor. You're here, you're gone. You're like the wind. After you're gone, other people will come. It's too late to make it better. Everyone's fed up, can't believe in nothing no more. People have no pride. People have no fear. People aren't scared. People only care about one thing and that's money. We're gonna destroy ourselves, nothing we can do about it. The only cure for the world's illness is nuclear war – wipe everything out and start over. We've become like a cornered animal, fighting for survival. Life is nothing. (Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God*)

Without the Book – his answer seems pretty logical to me. But the Bible provides a meaning for life – to have a relationship with God.

The Book was found in Josiah's day. He acted quickly to make up for lost ground.

What about you? Have you neglected it? If you have, you will lose it.

And to live without the Book is to stumble hopelessly in the night.

But His Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path!

You can have a shelf of Bibles and still loose the Book.

If scripture is the word of God, then, as Karl Barth says, "No one can stand before it as a spectator." (Magrassi, *Praying the Bible*, p. 31)