Kids’ Talk if present,

Have you ever lost anything important? How long did you search for it?

Did you ask for help?

Examples.

Have you ever heard a story of a person who was lost , maybe the situation was so dangerous that many people go looking and pray for Gods Help.

Read the two passages from Luke

Robyn

They highlight the priority of God in seeking the lost individual, focusing with deliberate intent to find and restore the lost to the whole. This action not only reflects the kindness and care of the One who searches to rescue the lost but also the importance of restoration and reconciliation between God and each unique individual and without exception. Christ sacrificed himself for the good of humanity He died and rose again. He paid the ultimate cost of rescue. (Maybe simplify for the kids)

Let us jump forward to the present day.

Circulate the Perspex momento, teabags and ice. Ice challenge.

This is the ninth month of the year and the 11th day. We in Australia usually express the date with the day first and then the month, but in the United States it is customary to put the month first and then the day , hence 9/11.

And what happened for most of us the time a and place is etched in memory for many of us. Perhaps you will remember. Similarly, this week with the death of Queen Elizabeth. Where you were when you heard the news will you always remember?

Back to 9/11. You probably have clear pictures in your mind of what happened, what the world witnessed in the New York on this day in 2001.In the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, 19 Islamic terrorists hijacked four planes in a coordinated attack on the U.S.. Two of the planes were flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City while the others went to Washington DC and Pennsylvania.

Amidst the tragedy of it all, do you remember scenes of firemen rushing forward through the dust and smoke to render assistance in spite of the very real danger to themselves? **Show slide**

Hold that thought, the unselfish reaction and call to duty by those men and women, the first responders. Many paid the ultimate sacrifice endeavouring to render assistance to those in peril

Another example, closer to home, do you remember the **largest peacetime search and rescue effort ever seen in Australia?**

**Barry tell us about the 1998 Sydney to Hobart.**

The 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race was the 54th annual running of the "blue water classic. It was the most disastrous in the race's history, with the loss of six lives and five yachts.  55 sailors were rescued. Let’s take a look.

Show this clip <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-18/10627634> Sydney to Hobart ABC

Shortly after the commencement of the annual Race, a 'super cell' storm stirred up massive seas in the Bass Strait. The storm cut through the fleet. Seven yachts were abandoned at sea. Thirty civil and military aircraft took part in the rescue operation of the 55 sailors from 12 impacted yachts. Only 44 of 115 yachts finished the race; many retired from the event, seeking refuge here at Eden.

Again, this event will never be forgotten by some amongst us Object, teabag.

I want to focus for a moment on the heroes who in my mind were the rescuers, willing to risk their own lives to save others. On 27 December, 1998, Sergeant David Key of the Victorian Police's air wing became the designated Tea Bag aboard a rescue helicopter. He would be the person dangled from a helicopter into the sea to rescue stranded mariners. He, and Constable Barry Barclay and the helicopter pilot, Senior Constable Darryl Jones would experience one of the most memorable days of their lives. David Key, Senior Constable Jones and Constable Barry Barclay left Melbourne in bright sunshine that afternoon, heading for Mallacoota. But then the clouds came down and the helicopter was hurled across Bass Strait at 420kmh, propelled by the same vicious storm battering the Hobart fleet. Their first task was to find the yacht *Kingurra*, which had lost a man overboard in 85 knot winds and pouring rain. Miraculously, they spotted him and Sergeant Key was lowered into the maelstrom. David was swept by three waves and dragged under, swallowing sea water. "I was thinking, `I don't want to be here, I am too old for this'. I couldn't hear the helicopter and I thought they had released the cable."

What he found out later was that Constable Jones was struggling to keep the helicopter above him - flying it at 85 knots just to stay still. He was 30 metres above the water and had a Doppler-based radar system which was bouncing a radio wave off the water and back to the helicopter.

He became aware of something coming across the sea towards him, told Constable Barclay to let out more cable, and went up to 50 metres. The mass of water which he said was about 300 metres across and looked like a giant plateau passed under him. The altitude instrument went from 50 metres to three metres.

Down in the water now was Sergeant Key, who said he popped out the back of the wave and free-fell around nine metres, knocking the wind out of himself in the process. Campbell, from the yacht, *Kingurra*, l suddenly appeared in front of him, injured and almost dead from exposure. "I grabbed his pants and put him in the harness."

David Kay still didn't know if he was connected to the helicopter but he followed his training routine, hooked up Campbell and raised his arms to say he was ready. Up they want, less than a metre from the door the winch seized, leaving him and Campbell hanging.

Campbell started slipping from the harness and Constable Barclay leant out of the helicopter to the end of his safety line, bear-hugged him, and somehow got him aboard.

But Sergeant Key was still stuck out there. After six tries the winch started and finally he was in.

They landed at Mallacoota with just vapour left in the fuel tanks.

The next day they were out there again and Sergeant Key went down the wire and plucked four sailors from the *B52*, which sank as the last man was being winched up.

But as Sergeant Key explained at the coroner’s inquest: "There were people dying out there. We had to have a go."

Think of other dramas in real life with which we are familiar

Two medics who played a crucial role in the rescue of 12 boys stuck in a flooded cave in Thailand.

Dr Richard "Harry" Harris and Dr Craig Challen who are long-time friends, were actually preparing for a diving holiday when they got the call to help with the delicate mission.

Both men put their own lives at risk working under great pressure to ensure everyone got out alive.

They were honoured for their "heroic efforts" as part of the rescue operation. In 2019 have were named Australians of the Year.

The dramatic rescue of the children and their coach took three weeks in June and July 2018 - an

"The pair have remained humble about their role in the rescue, but have been embraced proudly by Australians as quiet heroes whose efforts are admired and applauded."

One more,

The Thredbo landslide was a**catastrophic landslide that occurred at the village and ski resort of Thredbo, New South Wales, Australia**, on 30 July 1997. Two ski lodges were destroyed and 18 people died.

Midnight, without warning half the mountain gave way, Thunderous sound of the landslide quickly apparent and serious risk of further danger !

But when all that appeared solid how to assess the danger?

Wait for the dawn. Stuart Diver, with his wife, still in pitch black, heard muffled cries, felt concrete in each direction, cold immovable.

Hours goes by, determining risks, friends and relatives anxiously can do nothing, cries for help falling silent. Safety of rescue workers now paramount.

Stuart Diver knew only cold and sound of running water. Four layers of concrete, crypt submerging in icy water, sucking out all warmth, (drowned his wife Sally).

Then several hours later human chain gangs to move some of the debris.

54 hours after the landslide, a fireman heard a muffled voice from beneath the ruins. A feeble cry for help, the whole scene was instructed to be quiet, yes, there is was again the small voice.

The first inkling of hope.

slow progress, small hole to pump in warm air and then high energy drink.

Ready to cut, slow and noisy, vibrating. one Paul Featherston, spoke to him constantly about blue skies, parents hoping and praying for him the nation holding breath. Hour after hour went by …..

Cutting through with building tension Stuart with his hand over his face to keep out dust, then a Burst of light, he Clutched the hand of Paul Featherston the contact man.

‘We have reached you Stuart, we are going to get you out’, Stuart cling onto Pauls hand. Still the nation held its breath as if the flutter of a butterfly’s wing in Melbourne might cause another landslide happen in Thredbo. And after a seeming eternity they were through that was the moment that we had all been trying to pray into existence, the crowd parted, Stuart is lifted to safety. The hard hats and reflective vests around whole site erupted in cheers of relief and joy, many an eye across Australia flooded with tears … the exhausted jubilation as they pulled him out

Stuart Diver was the only survivor.

And what is the point of these three familiar disasters and their rescuers? The teams and individuals who played a crucial part.?

scenes of firemen rushing forward on 9/11

the teabag man dangling in and out of perilous seas

the Thredbo team and especially Paul Featherston holding Stuart Diver’s hand for hours, talking him through, coming alongside in the critical time.

What are the common characteristics?

Did they know the dangers and costs - yes

Did they step forward despite the dangers and costs to themselves - yes

Did they stick at it, until the job was done – yes

Did they do it for personal glory - No

Did they ever consider that the people in peril deserved to be rescued? – No

Then why did they do it?

Instinct to help, ability to employ empathy, to use what skills they had for a noble purpose.

All of these - yes.

And what part did we play? Lots of prayer? Yes

How do these stories relate? I think they give us insight as to what people are capable of.

I suggest it is true that a people created in the image of God can and do demonstrate God’s character. Extraordinary courage, selfless action those who allow themselves to respond spontaneously to the care of others. I have observed that in each of the stories of rescue that I shared that never did the responders sit back and say, No, these people aren’t worth rescuing, at the time of need there was no judgement. In such circumstances we do thank God, offer Him all praise and worship for these examples.

We understand in moments of triumphant rescue what Jesus meant in his Lost and Found parables*, In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over 99 good people who don't need to.”* Jesus said, “*In the same way God's angels are happy when even one person turns to him.” In the relief and the joyous celebration, the one who was lost now is found, we can all taste the joy of heaven!*

And what of the rescued, so often having tasted death and escaped its clutches many folk resolve to make something very good of their lives and give back to others in a similar way.

They have experienced being totally at the mercy of others, to cry out to God for a miracle, unable to save themselves and have discovered unconditional loving kindness when it mattered most. They were accepted as valuable, their life important. Praise God. Subsequently, yes, their lives were re-examined and put in a different perspective. Sometimes people adopt more cautious lives so as not to put others at risk, sometimes people respond to emulate their rescuers and devote themselves to a similar cause, like the SES or Marine Rescue. In Stuart Diver’s case he discovered the value of the Salvation Army and the meaning of a common humanity. He still bears the scars of his emotional trauma but he continues to face life’s challenges and grow as a person. Note also that one of the rescued yachtie’s on the video resolved to be a better father.

Jesus saved us each one, not as a set and forget achievement, but as a significant first step in a life of ongoing transformation, all starting with his loving and gracious acceptance.

Some notes on the Jerimiah passage

Our Old Testament readings for today aren’t so very cheery, as Jeremiah the prophet puts it,

I heard the Lord say,    “My people ignore me.  
They are foolish children who do not understand that they will be punished.  
All they know is how to sin.”

Both the psalm for today and this passage from Jeremiah, highlight the fact that God observes the sins of His people which invokes His anger.

*The Lord's fierce anger had done all of this.*

*The Lord said:*

*I have made my decision, and I won't change my mind.  
This land will be destroyed, although not completely.  
The sky will turn dark,* and the earth will mourn.

A people who should have known better, had chosen to ignore Him and His desire for working justice for the poor, so the imminent consequences are described.

Robyn reads the following,

I looked around.  
The earth was barren, with no form of life.  
The sun, moon, and stars had disappeared.  
The mountains were shaking; no people could be seen, and all the birds had flown away.  
Farmland had become a desert, Towns are in ruins

There are aspects of this description of a desolate landscape that Jeremiah foretells that reminds me and perhaps some of you as to the days we experienced during and directly after the Border Fires. The barren earth, the blocked out sun and moon and stars, many people evacuated and the streets were strangely bare. For months afterwards, no birdsong could be hear in the bush and what was once productive farmland now desert- like blackened and dry. Some towns definitely in ruins. Some would suggest that perhaps,

*The Lord's fierce anger had done all of this.*

Not very comfortable reading, not easy to interpret.

In the same sought of tone the Psalm of King David laments,

Robyn reads the first part of the Psalm for today, ,

Only a fool would say,  “There is no God!”  
People like that are worthless; they are heartless and cruel and never do right.

From heaven the Lord looks down to see if anyone is wise enough to search for him.  
But all of them are corrupt; no one does right.

Won't you evil people learn?  
    You refuse to pray, and you gobble up the Lord's people.  
But you will be frightened, because God is on the side of every good person.  
You may spoil the plans of the poor, but the Lord protects them.

There is a hint of hope, this time expressed in the longings of David,

*I long for someone from Zion  
    to come and save Israel!  
Our Lord, when you bless  
    your people again,  
Jacob's family will be glad,  
    and Israel will celebrate.*

How often have you looked at disaster and struggled to read into the accounts the actions or inactions of God ,

Questioned the thoughts of God, questioned is this God at work or is God the grieving witness to man’s folly or a natural disaster. Indeed, who has the wisdom or discernment to determine such questions?

How do these passages tally with the readings from the N.T.?

Two of today’s passages are segments of what could be termed the Lost and Found column of the new Testament. Today features the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin.