

**JESSE YOUNAN 21.5.73 - 22.7.08**  
**Funeral Homily - by Rev Geoffrey Abdullah**

25 July 2008

Jesus told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance." (Luke 15:3-7)

We heard in the Gospel this morning that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep to seek the one that is lost.

Who are the lost sheep? We usually associate the lost sheep with those who have sinned and lost their way and don't know how to return. This is one interpretation.

Another interpretation - The lost sheep are those who live on the fringe and do not seem to fit into mainstream society, they do not see life like the 99 and so they convince themselves that they do not belong. These people have love and sincerity in their heart and yearn to find the meaning, purpose and fulfilment in life. They can be priests or nuns, they can also be musicians and artists, philosophers and poets. They search for fulfilment in love, music, poetry and art. But they are also challenged to find fulfilment in the true Source – God.

These people often believe that they are isolated and alone, but they need to repent from this mis-belief and realise that they too have a place in God's family. In fact, the Gospels reveal that Jesus was especially close to these people on the fringe. Jesus could see beyond their body, their actions, their decisions. Jesus gazed straight into their eyes and saw the core of their hearts even though these very people may not have realised the beauty and love with the pain and suffering that was in their hearts.

In Psalm 139 we learn that the Lord searches us and knows us. He knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He discerns our thoughts from far away. Sometimes we wander from his path in search of love and truth.

But as the Psalm continues, "Where can we flee from the Lord's presence? If we ascend to heaven, he is there. If we are suffering and dying, he is there. Because it is the Lord who created us in our mother's womb and in his book all our days were written for us even before our first day began." We belong to God because we were created by God. Jesse was sincerely and passionately searching for the meaning of life and today I would like to highlight some areas.

1. In his music and his "frank, tender and raw lyrics". If you want to know Jesse, just listen to his songs and the eulogy also reflected Jesse's musical talent.
2. Jesse's passion for music was to shift to also include his 8yr old daughter Ella whom he loved so much with all his heart and soul and so he based a lot of his music on her.

3. In his final months when he was diagnosed with leukaemia, Jesse found meaning, love and support from his family. He often thanked them for their love and help and would say sorry for being a burden.

4. The hardest journey for Jesse and his family was the final journey which included Christ-like suffering. Jesse carried his suffering and pain with great courage and strength and as he saw his own body deteriorate he refused to give up hope. Previously, it had always been Jesse's music that was inspirational but now it was not only his music but Jesse himself was inspirational.

The lost lamb had found, in a strange and painful way, the true meaning of life – being encircled in pure selfless love. When I saw Jesse at Westmead hospital, I felt as if we gazed straight into each other's souls, we communicated, not with words or music (even though Jesse could speak), but rather in the powerful language of silence. I asked Jesse if he would like to pray and when I prayed for him I could sense a deep yearning in his heart, which I am sure, like for all of us, was a prayer to stay alive in this world so as to not leave his mum and dad, his brother and daughter and all his loved ones.

As for you Mum and Dad, how do you cope with your son, suffering and dying before you? Emad, how do you watch your brother, your hero, die in your arms? How does Ella deal with the loss of her father? On your own, you can't and you will never be able to. You tried from all your heart. You stayed awake when he Jesse was awake, you slept when he slept, you ate as much as his ate. You didn't want him to be alone, not even for one second.

Tony, Nadia and Emad, in this time of tragic loss, you too are the lost sheep in today's parable and it is the Lord who will help you carry this seemingly impossible burden. Yes, those last 10 days were a time of excruciating suffering for you, but as you also realised, those days were also a time of love and blessing.

Now listen to Jesse - "Come sit by me, dear Mum, Dad, Emad, Ella and friends, and let me wipe away your tears. Don't feel so bad. Although you know I won't be here when you wake up. Nothing could keep me from you, 'cause you are my heart"

In the end, Jesse gave you all he had, "Well my love is all I got to give" and his LOVE is exactly what he gave you, gave his friends, and gave to everyone.

God, in love and compassion, will wipe away all your tears and suffering. Jesse is no longer in pain and suffering, he has found his peace and rest.

Finally, we return to the first reading, "We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, whatever paths we take, whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, we always belong to the Lord", to the one who carries us on his shoulders leading us home, to the place where we belong.

Rest in peace, dear Jesse.

Rev Geoffrey Abdallah