

LOST AND FOUND

Theresa Pihl on Changing Perspective

Maddie leaned against the kitchen counter and sipped her coffee: black as the grief that threatened to overwhelm her once again. A pile of dirty dishes spilled over the sink. An empty pizza box sprawled across the table. She looked past the mess out of the open window where spring sunlight streamed. She heard the sparrows chattering away, beginning their day in the eaves of her porch. She closed her eyes and breathed in the steam from her mug, absorbing the bitter smooth taste of her favorite French Roast. When she opened her eyes, she caught sight of her hand. Something was not right . . . The pearl in the ring that James had given her on their 25th wedding anniversary, the year he died, was gone! The setting prongs gaped at her like frozen talons gripping emptiness.

Frantically, she glanced around the room, but everything looked cluttered — a perfect background for the “I Spy” puzzles her kids played when they were young, but this was no game. Adrenaline evaporated the morning fog from her brain, and a

sense of urgency took over. She looked at the sink. Could it have fallen off when she washed her hands? She lifted everything out of the basin and carefully checked the drain. The counters? She gathered several cups; a Diet Coke can sloshed its contents onto the linoleum floor. She grabbed a fresh dishrag out of the drawer, soaped it up, and began wiping the sticky ooze. Kneeling provided a shift in perspective and gave her a view of the hidden filth lurking in the crevice between the cupboard and the stove. “This spot mopping is not going to do the trick,” she thought. She needed a plan.

Regaining her feet, she started with the garbage and sifted through the trash. The rancid smell turned her stomach; but, task completed, she tied the edges into a knot and tossed it into the bin behind the garage. She then caged the clutter: throwaway, giveaway, recycle. Counters bare, she scrubbed them down, the oven and refrigerator, too. She cleaned everything; nothing escaped her notice.

At last, with the dishes put away, the floor mopped, and a fresh breeze ruffling the curtains framing the window, she saw it: her pearl! It was on the sill behind the sink. It must have popped off when she opened the window. The breath that had caught in her throat puffed past her lips. Tears pooled, spilled, ran down her cheeks. She felt James’s

presence; a whisper brushed her ear. She picked up the pearl, kissed it, and held it gently in the palm of her hand. Peace washed over her. James was with God; God was with her.

Maddie resettled against the counter; a fresh cup of coffee softened with a splash of cream warmed her hands. She surveyed the bright, well-ordered space and smiled. To the birds singing outside her window she called, "Rejoice with me! I have found my lost pearl! I was lost, but now I am found."

Questions for Reflection:

1) Maddie "looks past the mess" as she sips her morning coffee, enjoying the birds outside her window. She is unmotivated to change. Are there aspects in our lives that we need to address, but ignore or simply "spot mop"?

2) Maddie discovers that kneeling provides a shift in perspective and helps her see more clearly. How might prayer help us see more clearly? How can we make it part of our “plan”?

3) Sparrows recall God’s providential care.¹ Have you ever experienced an unexpected event or situation that jarred you out of your daily routine only to realize later that it opened a door creating space for an invasion of Grace?

¹ Luke 12:7