



Lost property

Heather Smith *reflects on* Philippians 3:4-14

Losing something, depending on what it is, can range from a vague irritant to a deeply devastating experience. A ballpoint pen can easily be replaced, but a laptop or phone may contain vital information and its loss can seriously disrupt life. Losing a significant item like a wedding ring may cause a different kind of distress and the loss of a loved one is life-changing.

What kind of experience of Christ must Paul have had, that made him able to say in his letter to the Philippians: "I have suffered the loss of all

things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ"? It would be an unusual person who could say that some major loss they had suffered was "rubbish" compared to the experience of God in their lives. Perhaps it helps to think of the deep grounding Paul had as a result of his relationship with Christ. Without it he could not have fulfilled his vocation to spread the Gospel.

We too need to be grounded in God, and that firm foundation is there for us, whether we recognise it or not. If we let the knowledge of it grow within us we may find that loss, although destabilising, does not destroy us. Christ first – and we will begin to see our lives, whatever they may bring, with God's perspective. 🍌

Gracious God, may the knowledge of your presence grow within us, grounding us until we stand firm in your love. Amen.

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

by Heather Smith

The United Nations has long recognised that sport has a role in bringing people together and set up the UN International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, which is held every year on 6 April. It focuses on how sport can make positive impacts for people and the environments in which they operate.

At an international level, sport brings together people from countries with diverse political

and economic situations, enabling them to get to know one another and to compete in a positive environment where they can make the most of their God-given talents and all the hard work they put in to be the very best.

In light of sport's peacebuilding capabilities, it's interesting to reflect on the practice of banning athletes from countries whose politics or international behaviour is particularly difficult. Today could be the day to give some thought to the role of sport as a peacebuilding activity. 🍌

“Do you wish your prayer to fly toward God? Make for it two wings: fasting and almsgiving.”

St Augustine (AD 354-430), theologian, philosopher and bishop

People of the New Testament

Herod the Great and his descendants

by Caroline Fletcher

The Bible uses the name Herod when talking of several different men: Herod the Great (40-4 BC – see Matthew 2), his son Herod Antipas (4 BC – AD 39; Matthew 14:5; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 13:31) and his grandson Herod Agrippa I (AD 41-44; Acts 12).

In addition, Herod the Great's other sons Herod Philip (4 BC – AD 33/34; Luke 3:1) and Herod Archelaus (4 BC – AD 6; Matthew

2:19-23) also get mentions, as does his great grandson Herod Agrippa II (AD 50-92/93 or 100 / Acts 25:13-27; Acts 26), although they are not referred to as Herod in the Bible.

We are fortunate to have the writings of the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, which tell us a great deal about Herod and his descendants. There are some fascinating characters among these rulers and learning about them helps us to better understand the world of Jesus and his first followers. 🍌