

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Christmas 2C
January 2, 2022
Luke 2:40-52

Finding Jesus

And [Jesus] said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49 ESV)

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

To say that Mary and Joseph have a problem is an understatement. They've lost Jesus. Returning from Jerusalem, where they came to the temple for the Passover, they assume that Jesus is with them, perhaps walking along with other boys His age. But when they stop for the night, they discover that He is not with them. It is almost impossible to imagine the horror that Mary and Joseph felt. Jesus is lost.

Or so they think. For it is not really Jesus who gets lost; Mary and Joseph lose Him. And sadly, people are still losing Jesus. How? When man's word is substituted for God's Word. When we stop caring about purity of doctrine. When we are mute before the insistence that all faiths are equal. When pleasing the self replaces being content with what God has given. When we make time for entertainment, the internet, or bodily nourishment but have no time for prayer and scriptural meditation. When we say we love God but are not loving to our neighbor and do not care about the multitudes who are unbaptized or who have forsaken their baptismal gift. When we lose our temper or when we gossip about our neighbor instead of putting the best construction on everything. When the despairs of this life overshadow the joy of our salvation. Or when we look for peace in the cockles of the heart rather than in the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, Jesus is often lost, even by us.

But the truth is: Jesus is not lost – we are. And today's Gospel shows us where He is to be found, and the joy of finding Him, or more precisely, His finding us.

Now the holy family had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, one of the three annual feasts at which every male was to appear "before the Lord." So every male was to go to Jerusalem, though women and young children would often accompany them. And they were not to come to the temple without an offering. Deut. 16 says, "They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you." (Deut. 16:16-17).

So why Mary and Joseph's distress? They seem to have forgotten who Jesus is. They seem to have forgotten the appearances of the angels: Gabriel, who told Mary that she would conceive a son by the Holy Spirit; and the angel that appeared to Joseph, giving the Child the name

“Jesus,” “for He shall save His people from their sins.” They seem to have forgotten the strange news that the shepherds brought, that the heavenly host had appeared, singing, “Glory be to God on high, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.” They seem to have forgotten what Simeon had said about Him when He was presented in the Temple. They seem to have forgotten the magi, who came to worship the Christ Child and brought Him gifts.

Yes, it seems they have forgotten, because when they find Jesus, Mary says to Him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” “Your father and I,” she says; but Jesus replies, “Did you not know that I must be in My Father’s house, [or, about My Father’s business]?” You see, Joseph is not Jesus’ father, God is, though Joseph is His guardian. That’s why Jesus “was subject to them,” perfectly obedient to them following the Fourth Commandment. And He did this willingly.

These are the first recorded words of Jesus in the Gospel, and they tell us right away who He is – Jesus is Son of the Father, Son of God. Here, just as the Glory of the Lord filled the temple in Solomon’s day, so now Jesus, the Glory of the Lord—the Word made flesh—has come to His temple.

He has come to Jerusalem, and He knows that this is where His real work shall be. “I must be about My Father’s business,” He says. And what is that business? He has come for the Passover, a festival at which the lambs were slaughtered, in remembrance of the first Passover, when the blood of the lambs marked the doorposts of the faithful, and the Lord passed over their houses, sparing them from the plague of the death of the firstborn throughout the land of Egypt. Jesus has come to this festival knowing that He is the true Passover Lamb, that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world by His blood. Later, when Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper, St. Luke will describe that day as “the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.” (22:7).

So even at the age of twelve, Jesus is already about His Father’s business, and as He already begins to bear the Cross, so does Mary. For she was in anguish, fear, and dread, wondering what might have become of her Son, the Son that had come in such a strange and marvelous manner, the Son entrusted to her by God, the Son conceived by the Holy Spirit. She says that they sought Him “in great distress,” or “suffering mightily.” After all, Jesus was lost, and in the Bible, lost is a metaphor for death. In Luke 15 when the prodigal son returns home, the father says that his son “was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.”

Jesus was lost to Mary, and Jesus is lost to us by our sins; shackled to our mortality and slaves to sinful desires, we are separated from God. Yet this Gospel shows us where He is to be found; this Gospel shows us where the healing of our griefs and the removal of our sins is to be obtained. For Mary finds Jesus in the temple, the house of God, the place of the proclamation of God’s Word. That’s why we too look to God’s Word for healing, forgiveness, life, and joy.

So, when is Jesus found? The Gospel says, “After three days they found Him in the temple.” When He is slain as our true Passover Lamb, again it is after three days that He is found, on the

third day, the day of Easter, the day of resurrection. There is our hope, there is our life, there is forgiveness to be found, there is joy and gladness.

This is why we come to the Divine Service: to find Jesus. For this is where He is found. He is here in His Father's house being about His Father's business; He is here giving out life and salvation in Word and Sacrament, in Baptism, Absolution, and Supper.

And what will we do now? Now that we've found Jesus in His Father's house? Let's imitate Mary and follow her example as she "treasured up all these things in her heart." Let us keep the Word also in our hearts, imbedding it in our minds, without ceasing to put prayers on our lips. It is so easy to be anxious, to lose heart, to lose Jesus. But fear not. As our Lord came to the temple, so now He comes to the temple of your body, filling it with Himself as He feeds you with His own Body and Blood. Your body becomes a living sacrifice, you are filled with His Word, and you are a member of His body, the Church. What an unspeakable privilege that is! By our own reason and strength we could never find Jesus, for He was lost to us. But He has found us, and we who were lost have been found; we who were dead, He makes alive. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener