

Searching for Jesus!

[Read Luke 2:41-52 NRSV]

⁴¹Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

⁴⁴Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

⁴⁸When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Opening Image

Have you ever lost sight of your children? I remember my mother taking me shopping during the Christmas Season. All I wanted to do was look at toys. My mother was not interested in looking at toys. She was interested in looking at shoes and clothes. Needless to say I was bored to death.

To alleviate my boredom I would wander off on my own to find the toy department. The next thing you know my mother would not know where I was. I did not tell her that I was going to the toy department. I assumed she would know where I was.

Of course my mother panicked as she began looking all over the store for me. When she could not find me she would go to the front of the store and have someone announce over the intercom, "Would Rick Carter please come to the front of the store immediately?"

After hearing my name broadcast for all to hear I would take my time and find my way to the front of the store. My mother caught sight of me as I walked toward the front of the store. Immediately, her fear turned into relief. But then one second later, her relief turned into anger, and the lecture began: "Where have you been? Do you know what you put me through? Don't you ever leave my sight again!" I tried to defend myself but to no avail. Needless to say, I was disciplined when I got home.

Intro to Scripture

If you've ever lost sight of a child, I'm sure you can relate to Mary and Joseph in today's Scripture passage. Our scripture begins with the family of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus travelling to Jerusalem from Nazareth to celebrate Passover. "Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover" (Luke 2:41).

The celebration of Passover required a pilgrimage once a year to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices. This was a 3 day journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

Jesus is noted to be 12 years old at the time of this particular journey. This is the age that a Jewish male moves from boyhood to manhood. He

and his family would celebrate this passage to adulthood in a ceremony we now call *Bar Mitzvah*.

Bar Mitzvah is a Jewish term that means Son of the Law or Subject to the Law. Being a Son of the Law meant that Jesus would be expected to know the difference between right and wrong. Knowing the Law affects Jesus' relationship with God the Father, his earthly parents Mary and Joseph, and his relationship with others.

Jesus in the Temple

Jesus is eager to share his understanding of the Law with the teachers of the Law so he stays at the Temple without informing his parents. Sort of like how I went to the toy department without informing my mother (Laughter).

Jesus astounds the religious leaders and scholars with his questions and knowledge of scripture. "He was in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:46-47). His understanding about God and the Law has matured and he is having a good time being with God the Father.

In the meantime his earthly parents have already packed up and begun the journey back to Nazareth. During their journey they notice that Jesus is missing! Their young son is missing. Think of what my mother felt

that day in the department store. Mary and Joseph immediately turn around and rush back to Jerusalem to search for Jesus.

Looking for a child

Notice what happens when they find him. Mary and Joseph finally locate Jesus in the temple – but what do they find? WHO do they find? Luke 2:48 says, “When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, ‘**Child**, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety’” (Luke 1:48). Notice that Mary addresses him as a child.

Mary and Joseph were looking for a child, but Jesus considered himself a man. Jesus knew the Law of Moses and was debating the scholars. Jesus had moved on from being a child to seeing himself as an adult.

Looking in the wrong place

Notice something else: Mary and Joseph were looking in the wrong place. They were traveling away from the Temple. Jesus never left the Temple. They were traveling away from God. Jesus was staying with God.

And one more thing to notice: Jesus was not lost! Jesus was with his heavenly Father. “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house” (Luke 1:49). Jesus was a man developing his relationship with God in God’s house.

Mary and Joseph did not understand. “But they did not understand what he said to them” (Luke 1:50). Here is the irony. Jesus is growing in

knowledge and wisdom while his parents remain confused about Jesus' relationship with God. Nevertheless, Jesus was obedient and went home with them.

Looking for God in the right places

Mary and Joseph thought Jesus was lost and searched for him. They were looking for a child instead of a man. They searched the travelling caravan instead of the Temple. They were looking in the wrong places. They were surprised to find Jesus in the Temple. Are we looking for God in the right places?

Baby Jesus

Maybe you're still looking for the Jesus of your childhood? When you pray do you think of Jesus as an adult or as a baby? There's a famous scene in the movie Talladega Nights where Will Farrell, playing race car driver Ricky Bobby, prays to the "8 lb 6 oz baby Jesus in his golden fleece diaper." When his wife objects, he says, "Look, I like the Christmas Jesus best, and I'm saying grace. When you say grace you can say it to grown-up Jesus, or teenage Jesus, or bearded Jesus, or whoever you want to."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AScaQqENcdQ>

Child's Prayer

Maybe you don't pray to baby Jesus, but maybe you pray in a childlike manner. When I prayed as a child my parents taught me to pray saying, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. The angels

watch me through the night until I wake in morning light, Amen.” Do you remember that prayer? Maybe you have taught it to your children. It’s a great prayer for kids, but hopefully by now you’ve changed the way you pray to Jesus.

Lord’s Prayer

Jesus himself gave us the model for a more mature way of praying. I bet you can say it with me: “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever, amen”.

The *Lord’s Prayer* is a very different prayer from our prayers as children. The *Lord’s Prayer* shows spiritual maturity. When we pray the *Lord’s Prayer* we are putting God first. We pray for God’s will not ours. We pray for bread not just for us but for others. We pray for forgiveness not just for us but for others. We pray to God, for the ability to be like God, so we can forgive others. The *Lord’s Prayer* takes us on a spiritual journey with God, by forming us, and shaping us to be mature Disciples of Christ.

Challenges

If you’re still looking for the Jesus from your childhood maybe it is time to consider a more mature relationship with Jesus? Here’s another

thing to consider. Mary and Joseph were missing Jesus because they were moving away from the Temple instead of towards it. They were traveling away from God. So what about you? On your journey, are you traveling towards God, or away from God?

Seeing and Hearing God

As our faith grows and matures our ability to see God and hear God grows. During our journey we use our eyes and ears of faith to witness the many signs and wonders of God. Have you ever seen God? Has God spoken to you? Some people say they have never seen or heard God. How about you?

Holy Scriptures

God speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is a living and breathing word. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey God will speak clearly to you through God's Holy Word. ***Search for Jesus in the Scriptures and you will find God.***

God is revealed in many ways through Jesus. At the Day of Judgment Jesus says to the righteous and the wicked that they have seen him. Jesus says to the righteous, when you served the least of these you did it to me.

Make it a point as the Body of Christ at Main Street UMC to love and serve others through: the Bethesda Center, Bethany Café, KAIROS prison ministry, the Adult Mission Trip, Hands Together Day, Prayer Shaw Ministries, After Hospital Care, Bereavement Committee, Appalachian

Service Project (ASP), and ReCreation. ***Search for Jesus through serving others and you will find God.***

Conclusion

Finally, consider this: Mary and Joseph thought Jesus was lost, but he wasn't. He was right where he was supposed to be. They were the ones who needed to turn around. They were the ones who needed to re-direct their journey. They were the ones who needed to search for Jesus—not because he was lost, but because they were lost without him. ***Search for Jesus by turning your life around and you will find God.***

All of us would be lost without Jesus. Becoming a Disciple of Jesus Christ is our most important journey on earth. It is a journey towards God. This is a spiritual journey and it starts in the church with our Baptism.

Invitation

This morning I invite you to consider where you are on that journey. Maybe you're just starting out. Maybe you haven't even started. Maybe you've been journeying with Jesus for years, but somehow your relationship with God has grown stale. The Good News is that Jesus is right where he's supposed to be: in this room, just waiting for you to find him.

In the Name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Selected Bibliography

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