

**Text: Luke 2:41-52**

<sup>41</sup> Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. <sup>43</sup> After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. <sup>44</sup> Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup> When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup> When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

<sup>49</sup> "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" <sup>50</sup> But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>51</sup> Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup> And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (NIV)

**Prayer of the Day:**

Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming deliver us from the corruption of our sin and transform us into the likeness of his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Alleluia. (Colossians 3:15a cf. NIV)

**Sermon Text:**

Well, here we are, the Sunday after Christmas. I've been in the pulpit for 19 years now, been going to church for pretty much every Sunday a little over double that and it's always the same. We were blessed to have over 500 people for our two Christmas Eve Services. We will be fortunate if we get even close to half of that this weekend. I'm not bitter about it, just acknowledging the reality. The Sundays after festivals are typically some of the most sparsely attended in the Christian Church year.

19 years in ministry has allowed me to hear any number of excuses for why spending regular time with Jesus, regular time with our brothers and sisters in faith just isn't doable at the moment. Work and finances, family and friends, emotions and strained relationships, a good solid foundation that somehow no longer needs to spend time with its God who says the opposite, the truth that Church doesn't make one a Christian which conveniently misses the follow up that while stepping into Church doesn't make one a Christian, the Christian will go to church.

Ah, but then why am I bringing all this up? Just trying to harsh the happiness that filled the air of the midweek festivals? No. Am I bitter that numbers are shrinking and trying to save face? Not really, though I'll admit it does hurt the heart to see Jesus set aside for any number of fleeting things in this world of ours. But then I know He has it all under control. He's got a plan.

No, instead, I bring it up because, well our pericope kinda does this evening/morning. It's the Passover, kinda like Christmas or maybe more accurately Holy Week for us and of course everyone is going to church, well temple, to celebrate it. Jesus is twelve, the average age of a seventh or eighth grader for us today and the family is in the larger familial procession to the Holy City of Jerusalem. It

was not uncommon for the procession to form groups, the Men would travel and talk, the women would travel and talk, the kids would travel and talk, maybe even play and make mischief on the way. Everything was going according to plan until evening came and the groups were breaking up and heading back to their smaller family groupings. No, Jesus!!

Now we can imagine the panic that overtakes Mary and Joseph who have devoted their lives to this child, who had fled to Egypt to escape the threat of Herod, who wanted their Son dead. Who have been living in backwater regions keep Him hidden from similar threats. Where was He? Who had taken Him? Was he safe? Was He dead? No, Jesus had stayed at Church.

A festival was not enough! He wanted more. He was found *in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.* <sup>47</sup> *Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.* It kinda blows up the excuses doesn't it? If God Who is the one who knows all things and gave us the Book doesn't figure the foundation is solid enough, that He has heard it all, or that His work of preserving the world is more important than this maybe we should double check our perspectives on things a touch.

Now, I'll grant you, Jesus is in the state of humiliation so he is growing in wisdom and stature, as we would, but doesn't that simply strengthen the argument? Yes, Jesus perhaps puts us all to shame, even as His mother forgets for a moment who He is and attempts to chastise Him. Jesus answer seeks to teach even as it explains, <sup>49</sup> *"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"* other translations have *"I Had to be about my Father's business"* probably more of a literal approach to the actual Greek in which Jesus says *"in My Father's things it is necessary for me to be."* Regardless of what your preference is, the meaning remains the same. Jesus is obeying His Father's will for Him in this world. Jesus has a purpose which far exceeds our own, He is to fulfill the will of the Father. Do we take it as seriously, even though we are far less knowledgeable than God, pale in comparison to His perfection? Do we acknowledge that there is ultimately a will and a purpose that far exceeds our own and the reminder of this of course Scriptures tell us makes our presence in this place all the more important. <sup>19</sup> *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,* <sup>20</sup> *by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,* <sup>21</sup> *and since we have a great priest over the house of God,* <sup>22</sup> *let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.* <sup>23</sup> *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.* <sup>24</sup> *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.* <sup>25</sup> *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* (Hebrews 10:19-25)

Enough of the guilt trip though. There is more here than just that! Yes, we are to be about the will of God, just like Jesus. But unlike Jesus' we aren't perfect. Unlike Jesus, our purpose is not that of Savior. Did you catch that in the first two lessons today? Jesus would be the priest who would suffer for the sins of the world. His perfection given to us even as it atoned for us and all the times frankly my will has not been in line with my Heavenly Father's but totally opposed to it. For all the times making mischief in the procession was more important than singing praise Jesus went to Church that He might make the Church, save the Church, free the Church to follow after Him, to rejoice forever in heaven with Him.

Well brothers and sisters, here we are, the Sunday after Christmas. I pray for fuller rooms than Christmas Eve and more importantly fuller hearts within them. But even if that's not the case, I suppose that simply means there is some work to do and that not just by the pastor or the teachers, but by us all as we go about our Father's business and when we need strength for the task at hand, strength for hearts stained by sinned, strength to face the enemies that plague us, well may we remember, Jesus went to Church and He'll be there waiting for us. Amen.