**Jesus is Never Lost**

Based on [Luke 2:41-52](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk2.41-52)

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First Sunday after the Epiphany

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This Gospel is about where one can expect to find Jesus. One wonders why Luke would include it…the only story of Jesus in his post-infancy youth. **Biographers would certainly be interested in what Jesus was up to between the ages of newborn and 30.**  People would pay to read that story. There would be a curiosity and fascination to find out. But it’s all trivia. As John writes at the end of his Gospel, “**Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written**” (John 21:25). But John gives the purpose of his gospel saying: “**But these [things] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name**” (20:31).

We must not get bogged down in the drama or idle fascination of seeing a picture of the living God at 12 years old. **The reason the Holy Spirit moved Luke to record this account is because of what it teaches.** It teaches us to believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that where he is to be found, there we may find eternal life.

First, we are told that Jesus parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. This is to show, as the Gospels do in all of the accounts of Jesus youth, that his parents were righteous God-fearing people. **It wasn’t enough for the Holy Ghost to simply tell us that his parents went this particular year. We are told they went *every* year.** They also took Jesus to be circumcised on the Eighth day as God’s Law requires, and forty days after his birth they went to the temple for the Purification of Mary and Presentation of Jesus according to the law.

Good parents take their children to church, teach them to participate in the life of the church**. Parents teach their children how to tie their shoes, how to say please and thank you, how to read, write, and count.** How much more should parents teach their children how to worship the One True God by their words and by their example?

Mary and Joseph were such good parents, which makes it all the more interesting to understand what we are told next: that they had misplaced their son. After the Passover feast, the holy family was travelling back to Nazareth from Jerusalem. And after a day’s journey, Mary and Joseph looked for Jesus but couldn’t find him.

This may sound irresponsible to our modern ears, but travelling was different back then. If you set out from Lethbridge and don’t realize your son is not with you in the car until you get to Edmonton, you might be a bad parent. **But in those days, travelling for religious feasts was a communal pilgrimage. Mary and Joseph were travelling to Jerusalem in a caravan of relatives and acquaintances.** We don’t know the details, but as a twelve year old boy, they likely understood him to be with cousins, aunts and uncles what have you, and that’s not necessarily bad parenting. An essential element of good parenting is trust--that is, giving your son the opportunity to be responsible on his own.

Whatever the case may be, the bottom line is that Mary and Joseph had lost Jesus--and they were greatly distressed, and had to search for him for three days. **Imagine your child being gone for three days. Whereabouts unknown for three days.** No amber alerts; no police station to file a missing persons report. No way of knowing whether your child went ahead of you to Nazareth or back to Jerusalem. From for all they knew Jesus was lost, perhaps in danger or worse.

You can imagine when they find him preoccupied at the Temple--not only are they relieved--but more than a little miffed. Despite their panicky fears--he wasn’t kidnapped, or trapped in a well. He wasn’t lost and unable to find his way. **Jesus was not lost, but he knew exactly where he was, and exactly what he was doing the whole time.** How disrespectful it must have seemed that he didn’t bother to even check in, but left them in three days of agony when he could have prevented it, or returned to them at any time to let them know he was okay.

When they find Jesus at the Temple, Mary says to him, “**Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress**.” “Great distress” is right. Worried sick! when Mary finds him in the temple, she accuses Jesus of mistreating them, of “breaking the fourth commandment” and “dishonouring his father and mother” by running off without permission.

Jesus treated them like they weren’t his parents. He treated them like they weren’t responsible for him. **Jesus caused them to worry.** **We can understand an average sinful child to make such mistakes, but *not the Son of God.*** *//* And that’s the point: Jesus is not behaving like he is the son of Joseph, but rather like he is the *Son of God*.

To Mary and Joseph’s distress, the 12 year old Jesus has this to say: “**Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house**?” Some translations say, “**Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business.**” What Jesus is saying is this: “When I am among those who are teaching and hearing God’s Word, I am honoring my Father. This is why my Father sent me. Why dear mother, does that surprise you?”

It shouldn’t have surprised her. Both Mary and Joseph had heard it directly from angels and shepherds and prophets that Jesus is God’s Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born to save the Word. God is his Father, who had begotten him. And when they heard it, they believed it. But years had passed and now, the scripture says, “**They did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.**” How quickly the Israelites forgot that God parted the Red Sea to save them, and grumbled in their wanderings. How often Did Peter and the other disciples hear Jesus predict his passion beforehand, and yet were surprised when it actually happened. How many signs were Mary and Joseph given to prove that Jesus is God’s Son, and yet they are amazed when he goes off to do the work of his Father without their permission?

If Jesus is the Son of God, sent to save the world, Mary and Joseph ought to expect that the Fourth commandment’s teaching of “honour your father” applies to him in a very unique way**. For the Son of God, the first commandment and the fourth commandment are the same Commandment.** They were told before he was even born that Jesus is no ordinary child, he is the Son of God. And look at all the anxiety, and misunderstanding, and doubt that assault his earthly parents because they forgot this.

This is to show how many trials, misunderstandings, and anxieties come about when we forget to remember who Jesus is and where he is to be found. **We often lose our way, but Jesus is never lost.** He is always where his heavenly father would have him be. We have this assurance: Jesus is to be found wherever his word is rightly taught and his sacraments are rightly administered.

It is difficult for us, sinful and unclean people, to hold the unseen truths of God above what we see daily with our eyes. We are taught by the Scriptures that Jesus is found every single Sunday morning in the temple of his body, and his blood poured out for sinners. Every Sunday, and more often during other holy days. **Why on earth do people search for peace and rest in anything else whilst His Sacrament is being celebrated?** Why do people panic and fret over their lives and what to do rather than come find the prince of peace in his Father’s house where he must be?

Martin Luther once said, “**I have so much to do today that I shall have to spend the first three hours in prayer**.” We don’t have time to not spend time with Jesus. He is not lost. He here for you, and you have found him, and he has come to forgive you your sins, so that you can go about your heavenly Father’s business with a clean conscience and in good cheer. God grant you his peace.