

## Sunday Lesson – December 26, 2021

### GOSPEL: Luke 2: 41-52

*“The found Him in the temple”*



#### Context

“To provide an historical and cultural reference, Luke records that Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover which is also the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Feast of Passover commemorates the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt through the death of all the first-born sons. With the image of Passover, Luke raises again the Jewish expectation for a Redeemer who will deliver Israel, both from sin and Roman occupation. That Jesus is *twelve* is significant in light of what follows. Generally, it was between the ages of twelve and fourteen that young Jewish men began their formal training in the synagogue, were received into Judaism as a “son of the law,” and were expected to begin strict obedience to the law. Since Jesus is *twelve* indicates he is surpassing what was expected for someone His age.” *(Excerpts from gracecommentary.com/luke-2\_41-52/)*

#### Insight

“Looking upon Jesus and seeing her baby, Mary asks, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” And Jesus answers, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” These same questions face us this week after Christmas, as peace and goodwill fade and Christmas leaves so many of us wanting. With Mary, we ask, “Why have you treated us like this?” We ask ourselves; we ask our families. We ask the church and we ask God, when our expectations are shattered.

And Jesus answers, “Why were you searching for me?” We know where Jesus has gone. He’s about his Father’s business.

But we aren’t ready to let go of our expectations and give our Jesus to God. We are not ready to accept that Jesus did not come to fulfill our expectations. He is not to be found in sentiment for the way things used to be or the way we wish things could be. Jesus is about the future. Jesus was born and lived and died and rose to be about God’s business of putting an end to our searching by making plain the way to God, even if that means shattering our expectations. In the Temple, Mary expects Jesus to behave a certain way and Jesus expects his mother to know why he isn’t. The problem is that Jesus and his parents have two different understandings of who Jesus’ Father is. Mary tells Jesus that she and his father have been searching anxiously. The message is plain to any child who stays out all night and upon returning home is greeted with a parent’s frantic, “Do you know how worried I was?” But Jesus responds that he’s been in his Father’s house, about his Father’s business. Again, I wonder just how Jesus said it. Was he surprised or scolding?” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/first-sunday-of-christmas-3/commentary-on-luke-241-52)*

#### Gospel Reading

“Every year Jesus’ parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up as they always did for the Feast. When it was over and they left for home, the child Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents didn’t know it. Thinking he was somewhere in the company of pilgrims, they journeyed for a whole day and then began looking for him among relatives and neighbors. When they didn’t find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him. The next day they found him in the Temple seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The teachers were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt. His mother said, “Young man, why

have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you.” He said, “Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?” But they had no idea what he was talking about. So he went back to Nazareth with them, and lived obediently with them. His mother held these things dearly, deep within herself. And Jesus matured, growing up in both body and spirit, blessed by both God and people.” The Message

### **What It Could Mean?**

“We see his parents’ piety in their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover and their care for Jesus in the anxiety and searching for him when he is not found in the group of family and friends with whom they traveled from and to Nazareth, as well as in the narrator’s closing words concerning Mary: “His mother treasured all these things in her heart” (verse 51b).

More than being about his parents, however, the story really focuses on Jesus. In a very small way, it fills something of the gap between Jesus’ birth and baptism. It shows that he was raised in the ways of Jewish piety and tradition. In spite of missing the caravan’s departure back to Nazareth, the scene characterizes Jesus as obedient (verse 51) and growing in wisdom and growing in favor (verse 52; echoing verse 40).

In the birth narrative, Luke has already made it clear that Jesus is God’s son (see 1:32, 35). But here, for the first time in Luke’s narrative, near the end of his childhood, Jesus claims that relationship for himself and his sense of purpose. Jesus’ role will extend far beyond the piety in which he is raised.

The pronouncement in this scene is found in verse 49. This is a key verse for the whole of Luke because it is the first words Jesus utters in the narrative. The pronouncement is paradigmatic for Jesus’ ministry. This is signaled not only by it being Jesus’ first speech but because it is the first occurrence of the Greek word *dei* (*it is necessary*). Then NRSV translates the word as “must” which is idiomatically fine, but Luke uses it as a

code word throughout the Gospel to indicate the necessity of Jesus doing such and such to fulfill scripture and his messianic purposes (for example, 22:37; 24:7, 26, 44).

In the context of the setup, the boy Jesus is answering Mary (albeit in the form of a question) about **why** he was not in the caravan and why they should not have had to search for him: he is in God’s house or conversing with God’s people. But in the wider narrative beyond the pronouncement story, the answer points to Jesus accepting his messianic mission to be about God’s things even as an adolescent with wisdom yet to gain. This would be the aspect that Mary and Joseph could not understand (verse 50).

We can find him out being about the “things” of his father. What those “things” look like is found in the rest of the gospel, especially in Jesus’ first, paradigmatic sermon: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor ... Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (4:18–19, 21).”

*(Excerpts from workerpreacher.org; Revised Common Lectionary by O. Wesley Allen, Jr.)*

### **Readings for Further Study**

- [John 8:58](#) “...before Abraham was born, I am!”
- [John 17:5](#) “Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

### **Thought for the Day**

“Some people talk about finding God – as if He could get lost.”  
~ *Unknown*

### **A Prayer**

Dear God, draw us to search for you where you will be found — in acts of mercy, compassion, and kindness, that we might treasure in our hearts, and witness to in our actions, your profound love. **Amen.**