

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Luke 2:41-52

In My Father's House

Growing up, there were more than a few times Mom told me, "Wait 'til you have kids." I think about that oftentimes when I go to the store. One of the games my brother and I loved to play—because, of course, he was always corrupting me—was Hide and Seek, where we'd hidden in the coat racks. What never dawned on me was how, while the child feels a rush of joy, the parent feels a rush of panic. No parent wants to hear their child's name called over the PA system, to be the one cringing as everyone looks at you like you're the worst parent ever. So, if you're ever at Meijer and hear, "Nicholas Johnston, please report to the information desk," you'll know what I'm thinking.

Step in Mary and Joseph's sandals. They'd faithfully gone to Jerusalem for the Passover. It was a long journey and they traveled with a large group. Jesus was evidently the popular kind of child, the kind adults get a kick out of talking with, and so Mary and Joseph didn't think much when they didn't see Jesus for a while. They looked for Him among their friends and neighbors. And then, panic! He wasn't with them after all. They had lost their son. Not only had they lost their son, they had lost God's Son, born to save the world. Talk about terror! Talk about cringing with embarrassment! Who wants to hear, "Savior of the world, please come to the information desk, your parents lost you and don't want all the world to burn in hell." It's understandable they are a tad upset when they track Jesus down, all the way back in Jerusalem. What was He thinking!

Three days later, they find Him. Three days! This is no five minutes with the pimply PA announcer. Three days! Parents, imagine what would be racing through your minds—no Amber Alerts, no police to call, no cell phones, no nothing; just three days to panic. But who said raising the Christ would be easy? "Wait 'til you have kids," Mary could have told Him, but she already knew that through faith and by His cross He was going to have the most disobedient children of all: us.

It's hard to imagine what Mary and Joseph felt, but should it be? How often haven't we lost Jesus in the excitement and confusion of things? We lose sight of Him when we neglect His Word and allow others to convince us He is someone He is not, that He is somewhere He is not. We lose sight of Him in our sadness, when our emotions veil His face so He seems distant when He is near. We lose sight of Him when worry puts blinders on us so that we can see nothing but that which makes us anxious. We lose sight of Him when our comfort becomes more important than our confession. We lose sight of Him when the thought of not living in some sin for a time seems more upsetting than the thought of living in hell forever. We lose sight of Him when we just stop looking for Him, perhaps not overnight, but over time, the same way we develop any unwanted but seemingly inescapable habit. But have we known the panic of Mary and Joseph as we should? If only we could truthfully speak those words of Mary and Joseph: "*Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress!*"

Christ was probably as good as dead in the hearts of His parents. The human mind gravitates to worst possible scenarios. Surely, every conceivable tragedy ran through their minds. How many terrible things could have happened to Him already! What were they to do? And so they run. And we are tempted to do the same.

When we lose sight of Christ, often our first temptation is to run. We get busy. We lift every stone, scour every nook and cranny, hoping to bring to life in our hearts Him whom we are sure is dead on account of our own thoughtless neglect and lack of care. We plague ourselves with spiritual proprietors, looking to everything from celebrities to refrigerator magnets to tell us where to find our Jesus. But our Jesus is not hiding. He is where we should expect Him to be.

“Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” Jesus says this to His parents with childlike innocence, and, just as they cannot understand at the time what He has spoken, He cannot understand their concern. How could He not be with His Father, in His Father's house, speaking to His Father's people of the things of His Father? He is not a wayward son, but the perfect Son, in whom Mary and Joseph find new birth as children of His heavenly Father.

We hear of the boy Samuel in the Old Testament, that he submitted to the priest Eli and grew in wisdom and stature. He served in the tabernacle and, with adulthood, was made a priest, a mediator for God's people. Now today we see the better Boy, also growing in wisdom and stature, preparing to offer the complete and final sacrifice of Himself on the cross for His people as the great High Priest, already, though but twelve, instructing the priests as one with authority. The new and better Samuel, He is Student and Teacher, Servant and Priest. And, ascended to the right hand of God the Father, He is now the one and only Mediator between God and man, interceding for us as our Brother and Advocate.

Jesus speaks the same to you. *“Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”* Silly us! How could we have been so worried? We can find Him where we left Him: in His Father's house, speaking to His Father's people of the things of His Father. There is no harsh rebuke, but a loving reply spoken with the innocence of a child. We ought not be afraid to come to Him again. No, His gentle speech should set us to running, not all around in confusion, but straight to Him where He was, and is, and shall remain until He comes again: in His Father's house.

Christ is just a child in our text, yet He is already a Shepherd to His people, even to His parents. How Mary and Joseph must have marveled when they looked back on this day! How we should marvel when we look back to those times Christ has welcomed us back into the fold when we have lost Him! What more reason than the panic that fills us when we lose sight of the Savior should we need to resolve never to lose Him again, to take Him with us when we go home and out into the world, to return often and with delight to His Father's house? If only it didn't so often take us leaving Him behind to make us appreciate His presence!

Hear your name over the PA system of God's house today, as your Father calls you out of whatever clothes rack has distracted you. Christ might have seemed as good as dead in your hearts, as He did in the hearts of His parents for three days, but Christ has a way of rising on the third day. Let Him find His Father's temple in your hearts through faith, for there is nowhere He would rather be than in His Father's temple. *“After all, do you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”* He would say to you today. Listen. Amen.