

Luke 2:40-52

The shepherds were directed to the manger to find Jesus. The Wise Men went to the house in Bethlehem where Jesus was. Simeon was led by the Spirit to the temple when Jesus was brought there. Anna, who never left the temple, rejoiced when Jesus was brought in. Everyone knows where to find Jesus, except for the two people who should know best of all....Mary and Joseph. They search everywhere in their quest for Jesus, except within the house of God. Only when every other place turns up empty do they go to the temple.

Don't they get it? That's what Jesus wanted to know. Of all people, they should have known that He would be in His Father's house. But even after He pointed this out, Mary and Joseph simply did not understand.

You get it. That's why you are here this morning. That's why coming to the Father's house is your intentional plan and desire every Sunday. This is where Jesus must be. Not because the floodwaters haven't reached this place, and we are safe and dry here. Jesus is here, and here you will find Him, because this is what He Himself says: "*I must be in My Father's house.*"

So why did Mary and Joseph seek Him everywhere else? I think we can safely assume that they forgot who He was. The fanciful tales told about Jesus in His early years are nothing but lies. They have Jesus, as a boy, showing off His divine powers by the working of many miracles. He did nothing of the kind. This story in Luke 2 attests to the fact. Jesus acted like a normal human boy in every way, except that He committed no sin. For twelve years nothing happened to cause Mary and Joseph to say, "Oh that's right! Jesus is the Son of God!" Rather, they were so accustomed to Jesus speaking, acting, and growing up as every little boy does, that they were astonished when they found Him in the temple. "Jesus!" said His mother, "Why are you here? Your father and I have been searching for you!" She was so accustomed to Jesus' place within their family, that she forgot that Joseph was not His true father; that the house of God, and not a house up in Nazareth, was His Father's house.

And so Mary and Joseph were very anxious. For three days they were in great distress. And yet, Jesus was right where He was supposed to be. Had they only known - remembering who He is - all would have been well.

You are in your heavenly Father's house, and all is well. Maybe, like Mary and Joseph, your life has been frantic lately. Maybe you have been searching like they were - searching for peace of mind; for an answer to your troubles; searching for help from God. We Christians get anxious just like others do. We have problems, even severe ones. Being a Christian does not mean that your life is always steady and comfortable. But it does mean that you know where to find Jesus: here in the Father's house.

The great mistake that so many make (and we do the same thing) is to say or think, "Jesus is in my heart. Why do I need to seek Him in the Father's house?" That's like saying, "Food is in my belly. Why do I need to sit down and eat?" You and I cannot keep Jesus in our heart and life any more than we can keep food in our stomach. It nourishes us while it is there, but unless we keep returning to the table, our bodies will become weak from lack of nourishment and we will die.

This is why Jesus promises to be in the Father's house. So that weak and dying sinners like us know where to come for life, spiritual nourishment, and God's grace and forgiveness. Here in the Father's house we sit down to eat because here Jesus serves us, His welcome guests. Look at what it says of Him in our text. He was submissive to Mary and Joseph. The Son of God submitted to His earthly parents. He could have lorded over them, but He didn't. Even as a boy, God humbled Himself to a position beneath Mary and Joseph.

And He does this here for you. He is our God. But He does not bid us come to the Father's house in order to lord over us. He invites you here to this table to serve you as One who gets down beneath you. You and I are the sinners; He is not. But Jesus went to the cross for you. He was struck in your place. He became your servant in life and in death. And here, He places on the table for you, all the gifts of heaven He won on the cross for you.

Are you anxious? Here is contentment. Are you suffering? Here is patience. Are you dealing with guilt and remorse? Here is comfort. Jesus is here in the Father's house for you. He welcomes you. He receives you in mercy. Your sinfulness - all of it - He forgives. It matters not how awful you were in 2015. He completely forgives you. Nothing is charged to your account. Jesus paid for every sin of yours.

And here He gives you His Holy Spirit to guard you; to keep sin from mastering you. Unlike Jesus, sin is never submissive. It always desires to lord over us; to rule our life; to keep us in bondage, and to separate us from the love of God. Look how distressed Mary and Joseph were when they were apart from Jesus. They were confused and lost. That is the life of all who do not seek Jesus in the Father's house. That was our life before Baptism.

But no more. All is well. You are here for Jesus because He is here for you. He removes from you the dominion of sin. He releases you from its bonds. He puts your heart at peace. He forgives you.

If you have been making some New Year's resolutions, would it not be good to resolve, by the grace of God, to be faithfully in the Father's house in 2016? Not by way of command. Not by threat of punishment. By invitation. By believing Jesus' word to you that He will never fail to be here in the Father's house for you. Amen.