

Luke 2:40-52

January 2, 2022

If the technology of our modern era had been a part of that day and age, Mary would have given Jesus a text message, “We’re getting ready to head back home to Nazareth,” and Jesus would have replied, “Okay, I’m in the temple.”

But had this been the case, St. Luke would surely not have recorded this account in his Gospel, for it would simply have said that Mary and Joseph took Jesus with them to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover when He was twelve years old, and then He returned with them to Nazareth.

Where is the drama in that? And more, what would you and I be able to take from this account except a little history lesson?

Now it is true that had they had our advanced technology, Mary and Joseph would have been spared the time and effort, along with all the distress, in their search for Jesus. Yet what might be distress for one person is a blessing for another.

These rabbis in the temple would have been the greatest theological minds of their day. It was customary for them to allow the people access to their wisdom when they all gathered together for the feast of the Passover. Through these question-and-answer sessions, the masses would gain an understanding of the Scriptures.

Yet for three days, the same three days in which Mary and Joseph were enduring great distress, these rabbis were themselves being taught the Scriptures and by a twelve-year-old boy. Their minds were being exposed to the right understanding of the Scriptures, and for the first time in their lives. Jesus would have been connecting the dots for them, showing them the Christ in all the passages of the Old Testament. And so, they were amazed at Jesus even while Mary and Joseph were distressed by Him.

But why, really, were they distressed? Is it because Jesus was lost? If you cannot find your car keys, and after searching for them, discover that they were exactly where you had placed them, were your keys ever really lost? Jesus never left the temple. He never moved from His place. He was exactly where Mary and Joseph left Him. He was where He was supposed to be. And because He was, He was a great blessing to the teachers of Israel.

Jesus is never the one who is lost because He is always where He is supposed to be. When you and I endure distress in life, it’s not because Jesus has moved away from us, but we have moved away from Him, from where He has promised to be for us.

“*I must be,*” He says, “*in My Father’s house.*” And so, He is here with us now, just as He was with the rabbis in the temple.

His promises never waver. They stand for all time. Jesus is here in the Father’s house – in the Divine Service for you, in your baptism, in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, in the living words that come into your ears, words that give you Christ because they are filled with Christ.

And because you are here with Jesus in the Father's house, you are blessed by Him even as the rabbis were blessed by Him in the temple.

Yet even as you are blessed, Mary and Joseph are out there right now searching for Jesus, even on this Sunday morning. They search everywhere, but they will not find Him, not out there, because He is where He is supposed to be, in His Father's house.

We've been there, haven't we? We've been Mary and Joseph, enduring great distress in life. Searching, and yet not finding. Not finding peace in our hearts, and as a result, suffering anxiety. Feeling as if we have lost our way. And maybe even blaming God for our distress just as Mary did.

But He hasn't moved. His love for you is the same as it has always been. He has not abandoned you nor forsaken you.

And know this, He understands fully your distress. He endured that, and much more, when He endured the penalty for your sin on the cross.

You see, Jesus is always where He is supposed to be. When they nailed Him to the cross, that is where He was supposed to be. For you. For your salvation.

What is distress for one person is a blessing for another. His distress on the cross is the greatest blessing in your life because His distress means, and declares, that your sins are forgiven. And you are forgiven, everyone of you is forgiven of all your sins. This is Jesus' word and promise to you in your baptism. And He never moves away from what He has promised.

In His promises is where He is supposed to be, and always will be. And because His promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation is for you, you are blessed both now and forever. Amen.