

"Lost, or Found?" Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany 2023

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

“My, how you have grown!” Those words, or something similar were uttered in households across Canada over the past two weeks as families were reunited, and people were home for the holidays. And how Jesus has grown, as the Gospel of Luke continues. Last week He was but an infant. Now we read that He is twelve years old. And, as parents and grandparents will tell, those precious years go by just that fast.

Not only has Jesus grown, but it is a holiday. The Passover holiday in springtime. But they are not at home. Mary and Joseph and Jesus have traveled the ninety to a hundred miles from Galilee down to Judea, and up to Jerusalem. For it was the requirement that every Jewish man travel to the temple for the Passover, and this whole family of three made the journey.

All went well, but now it was time to return. They had come with many friends and relatives and they all lit out together. But when evening came, and they camped for the night, Jesus was not to be found. Apparently Jesus was lost. At least they could not find Him. So Mary and Joseph decide to turn around as it were and go back. In Jerusalem they look high and low, and --- you know how it is when you

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have lost, misplaced, or are looking for something you can't remember where you put it. It's always in the last place you look. And that was just as true for Mary and Joseph as for you and me. The text tells us "after three days." We don't know whether those three include one day up, one day back, and one day searching, or if the three don't start until after they get back to Jerusalem. Yet we do know that they had looked here and there because Mary says to Jesus, once they find Him in the Temple, "How could you do this, how could you treat us this way? Don't you know that your father and I have been searching for you in great distress!"

Now, we as Canadians might be thinking, what do you mean, how could you do this? How, Mary, could you and Joseph leave Him behind? It was a case of not-at-home alone. Jesus doesn't answer her question about how He could do it, and just who did or didn't do what they should or shouldn't have done, that is, exactly who lost whom? But He does answer the second question, Don't you know that your father and I have been searching for you? Or at least he gives a reply.

"Why are you looking for Me?" It seems an odd response. I would venture to say it might not be well received by many frazzled mothers. Yet, Jesus asks just the right question. Why are you looking for Me? Why were they looking for Him? Well, because He was lost. What makes us

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say, what made Mary and Joseph think, that Jesus was lost? Because He wasn't where He was supposed to be. Really? Are we so sure? Was Jesus the one who was lost?

Why did it take so long to find Him? Because Mary and Joseph looked everywhere else first. Wherever it was in Jerusalem they had looked, and whether that was two whole days, for just earlier that same day, they had looked for Him where they thought that He would be.

Which brings us to us. Where do we look for Jesus? Don't we look for Jesus where we think that He should be? And where do we think that He should be?

Some people think that Jesus should be in their prosperity. That being a Christian will bring, "your best life now." Why are you looking for Me? So that life will have fewer troubles and more happiness. That is not true at all. For God sends the rain on both the just and the evil. Remember Job, who was righteous before God. Yet all types of calamity fell upon him.

Jesus gives His blessed mother the answer key to His answer, Why are you looking for Me? "Don't you know that I must be in My Father's house?" And of course, Mary and Joseph should have known? "Mary did you know?" Yes, yes, she knew. It seems that she and Joseph forgot, but they knew. They knew that Jesus was the Son of God. The angel

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Gabriel appeared to Mary and to Joseph, they heard the shepherds tell the message from the angels, they had the words from the wise men. And another dream and a trip to Egypt. They knew. But it was long ago. Perhaps they forgot. What we do know, is that they didn't understand. Luke writes, "they did not understand the words He spoke to them."

Sometimes, we don't understand. We ask, "Why, God, why? And When, God, when?" Why did this happen and When are You going to do something about it. And it seems that God is lost. Or least, we can't find Him in what is happening to us or around us, any more than Mary and Joseph could find Jesus.

But God is no more lost than Jesus was lost. Mary and Joseph thought He was lost because they couldn't find Him. But they couldn't find Him because they were looking in the wrong places, and weren't looking in the right place. Where is the right place? In His Father's house. Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business and in my Father's house. What was the Father's business that Jesus is about? To seek and to save the lost, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Just to be clear, the ones who were lost are us, not Jesus. He is where He needs to be, in the Father's house.

Some people look for God in nature. It is nice when spring returns, to go out. In the woods or even in the yard or garden. It's beautiful and

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peaceful. The psalms tell us, "the heavens declare the glory of God." Nature is His handiwork, His creation. It speaks of a creator, but it does not tell us that Christ is the Son of God, or that He died to redeem us. We know that only from where Christ has promised to be. In His Word. In His baptismal washing. In His holy supper. God is everywhere. But He is only in a place where you can find Him, you can see Him, where He has promised to be for You: His powerful Word, His sacraments, His Holy Church. "I once was lost, but now am found." That wasn't Jesus in the Temple. That is us. And the boy Jesus in the temple, in His Father's house, is the same Jesus who will bring us to His Father's house, the one with many mansions.

For Christ has died. Christ is risen. And Christ shall come again.
Amen.