

“Christmas Continued”

Psalm 148; Luke 2:41-52

December 29, 2024

Introduction

- One of the greatest blessings of my life is, obviously, Natalie.
- She’s been such a wondrous blessing I can’t even begin to tell you.
- But those of you who know me, know me.
 - o I’m a bit of an absent-minded professor.
 - I tend to forget things, misplace things, you name it I am a bit of a disaster, really.
- But you see, Natalie must’ve recognized how often she was having to help me search for my keys.
 - o Because she put up a little key holder just inside the door.
 - Once I got in the habit of putting my keys there, I almost never lose them!
- Losing things is frustrating, isn’t it.
 - o I’m glad to not be losing keys all the time but I still manage to misplace things.
 - o What do you do when you can’t find something?
 - You retrace your steps, trying everything you can to remember where you left the thing you’re looking for.
 - You methodically go through everything you’d done over the last interval and then seek out those places, hoping that’s where the item is.
- But I think what is worst of all is when it feels like you’ve misplaced someone and you can’t find them.
- I’ll never forget being in the mall one time with my mom when I was young.
 - o I was bored. Mom seemed to be shopping forever so I decided to have a little fun.
 - I hid.
 - Do you remember those large, circular racks they used to have at department stores?
 - Well, one of those had pants which hung all the way down to the floor.
 - I nestled in there and just hid.
 - o I got to playing with a matchbox car and lost track of time, I guess.
 - The next thing I know, my name was being called on the intercom.
 - o I came out from under that rack and one of the employees saw me.
 - o Took me back to the front where my mother was waiting.
 - o I’ll never forget the look of relief on her face when I showed up.
 - I’ll also never forget how quickly that relief turned to anger when she realized what I’d done.
 - The employee told her.
 - o It’s really amazing I’m here today, that my mom didn’t just ring my neck there and then.

Transition to passage

- Our story today begins with some very anxious parents.
- Their child is missing and they don’t quite know where He is.
 - o You can only imagine the terror that would come when Mary and Josph realize that Jesus wasn’t with them.
- I read lots of commentaries preparing for the sermon.
 - o Some of them go out of their way to defend Mary and Josph, citing all the cultural differences between then and now.
 - o Others really throw them under the bus.
 - o But regardless, I think it is safe for us all to realize that parents, like anyone else, make mistakes.
 - That’s why we pray, right? That we would make fewer and fewer mistakes as we parent.

- The long and short of it is that while they were leaving Jerusalem following the Passover, Jesus gets left behind, accidentally.
 - o After a bit, they realize it and immediately screech back to Jerusalem to find Him.
- Why were they in Jerusalem?
 - o It was expected that everyone who lived within 25 miles of the Temple would come to the Passover.
 - o Further, men and women wanted to come, it was considered a high point in one's spiritual development.
 - o This passage also shows us indirectly about Jesus' upbringing.
 - o Clearly, He was raised in the Jewish faith by faithful parents who were dedicated to their religion.
 - There was a consistency to their worship.
 - This is regular, habitual worship.
 - Also notice that it is a family-centric faith.
 - Jesus isn't left behind but is fully incorporated into His parents' spiritual life.
- Do we have that kind of dedication in our faith lives? Do we make coming to church weekly a top priority in our lives?
 - o Excursus – People are coming less to church.
 - o In a Fear of Missing Out world, fewer and fewer people are making Sunday about church, finding the secular world overtaking the world of faith.
 - But just like Mary and Joseph, there is the importance of building a habit and living a life of compliant dedication.
 - o It takes humility to make Sunday worship a priority.
- And Jesus cared about learning more about the faith.
 - o **Proverbs 1:5** – *“Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—”*
- Jesus was interested more in learning about His faith than anything else, even more than attending to His parents.
 - o Are we similarly wired?
 - There needs to be a time and place where everyone of us makes the decision to be more dedicated to their faith.
 - We're coming up on a great time of year to do it.
 - o As the New Year rolls around, it seems a fitting time to shoot for change.
- Changing habits though is hard.
 - o Start small and be specific.
 - Define the habit clearly.
 - Make it manageable.
 - o Track your progress and celebrate wins.
 - Use a check sheet or some other way to note compliance with the new habit.
 - When you reach milestones, celebrate your victory!
 - Reach 14 days without a doughnut, I'll celebrate.
 - o By having a doughnut? Just kidding.
 - o Stay accountable.
 - Maybe begin with a buddy to create an accountability circle.

The Priority of the Father's Business

- Rebuffing his parents, Jesus asserts His primary calling, showing urgency and devotion.
 - o That's two of the things I can lack at times, urgency and devotion.
 - One of the things that comes from having a lack of much anxiety through faith is the inability to prioritize and move forward quickly on projects.
 - I'll be the first to see this in my life.

- But urgency and devotion are what's called for by a Christian.
 - **Romans 13:11-12** – “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”
 - **Ephesians 5:15-16** – “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”
 - **Hebrews 3:13-14** – “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”
 - Each of these passages speaks to the urgency and devotion required by a Christian to have.
 - We have a point and a purpose and God is continually directing us to it.
- **John 4:34** – “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”
- Karl Barth: “The call to follow Christ always leads beyond what is comfortable.”
 - This is the most truthful quote I’ve come across in a long time.
 - When I meet real Christians, what I always find is a willingness to go beyond what is expected to see God’s will accomplished.
 - Without question, the most amazing people I know and meet are Christian.
 - I’ve met people who are so dedicated doing things I think unimaginable yet there they are, doing the deal.
 - It speaks to the Holy Spirit’s work in their life.
 - These people are truly blessed by God.
 - **Key Insight:** True wisdom leads to aligning our lives with **God’s mission**, not just personal comfort.

The Process of Growth

- As you apply urgency and devotion to your faith, you will grow.
 - **Luke 2:52** – “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”
- **Spiritual Growth is Incremental and Relational**
 - Jesus grows **holistically** – mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.
 - This growth is continuous, reflecting the long **journey of discipleship**.
 - **Philippians 1:6** – “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
 - C.S. Lewis: “Isn’t it funny how day by day nothing changes, but when you look back, everything is different?”

B. Application – How Do We Pursue This Growth?

- **Intentional Habits:** Prayer, fasting, fellowship, Scripture reading.
- **Community:** Growth happens in **relationship with others**.
- Hebrews 10:24-25 – “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together.”