

Christmas 2 1/4/14
Luke 2:40-52 B

“WHY WERE YOU LOOKING FOR ME? DID YOU NOT THAT I MUST BE IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE?”

The December 31, 1989, edition of the daily newspaper in Memphis, TN, contained this article:

Five-year-old Tyler Payne was on his way home to Texas with his family after a Christmas visit with his grandparents in Knoxville when he took advantage of a service station stop in Nashville to use the restroom. The restroom door stuck. The family car pulled out. Young Tyler was left behind. Glenn Payne and his wife, Kris, noticed a small absence among the five boys and one girl snoozing in the back of their station wagon about two hours later in Jackson, TN. Back in Nashville, Tyler had been rescued by a woman who had heard him screaming for his mommy. “This is embarrassing, but I’m glad he’s safe,” said Payne, the boy’s dad, an electrical engineer. Payne said the family usually does a head count before embarking, but he had turned to the driving over to Mrs. Payne. Nobody counted. Sobs turned to smiles when Tyler saw his family.

Then the article ends with this sentence:

Tyler Payne says he’ll never go to the bathroom again.

This unfortunate oversight of the Payne’s is quite similar to that of Mary and Joseph in our Gospel. The Payne’s **forgot** young Tyler journeyed with them on their Christmas visit in Knoxville. Like the Payne’s, Mary and Joseph forgot who journeyed with them to Jerusalem for the Passover. Yes, this was Mary’s son, conceived in her womb and born twelve years before in the city of David. Yet, this was also God’s only-begotten Son.

The hymnwriter expressed more sentimentality than Scripture when he wrote, “No crying he makes.” Jesus was a true man, born of the Virgin Mary. That means He cried, teethered, fell down the first time he tried to stand on his own two feet, suffered and died.

But, Jesus was also true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity. When the Angel Gabriel visited Mary, he told her, “[He] will be called the Son of the Most High (Lk 2).”

Jesus is “true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary,” as we learn in our Small Catechism. Yet, did you catch His mother’s words, “Son, why have you treated us so? Your father and I have been searching for you in great distress (v. 48).” “You father and I.” Those are interesting words to ponder. They notice their son is missing and it takes them three days to look for Him in His Father’s house. Mary and Joseph had forgotten. They had forgotten that Jesus was true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity and that God was His true Father.

Dear Friends in Christ, do we forget who journeys with us on life’s way? Jesus said, “I am with you always.” Yet, when the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death overwhelms us and the cross becomes heavy, what is our reaction? “Why, me, Lord, what have I ever done?” as though somehow God is punishing us, as if Jesus did not really die for all sin upon the cross. Instead of fearing, loving, and trusting in God and His good and gracious will above all things, we pray to God as though he were a magic genie and we grow angry when He does not grant me my every wish. Instead of trusting that God will open His hand to satisfy our every need of body and life, we hoard, want more, and love the things of this earth above the Kingdom of God.

Like the Payne’s, like Mary and Joseph, we forget. We forget Jesus is with us.

II. What is that old saying? “It’s always in the last place you look.” How true that is of Mary and Joseph -- “After three days they found him in the temple.” The last place they looked for the Son of God was in God’s House. With the first recorded words we have of Jesus, He reminds Mary and Joseph -- and us -- who He is and why He has come to dwell among us, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” He teaches us that He is the son of God and that He has come to do His Father’s business.

The Father’s business was there -- in the temple. That is where He dwelt among His people, above the Ark of the Covenant, between the wings of the cherubim. Separating God from His people was that curtain, a visible reminder to the people that their sin separated them from God. God’s business was the forgiveness of sin, doing away with that which separated the Creator from His creatures. It was here that sacrifices were made for sin. It was here that the Passover Lambs were brought to be slaughtered.

So, the Son came to His Father’s house to be about His Father’s business and His Father’s business was to allow His Son to sacrifice Himself upon the altar of the cross for the to be the atoning sacrifice for the sin of all the world. As the Lamb of God, Jesus carried the sin of all the world to the sacrifice of Calvary. At that very moment that Jesus “cried out...and yielded up His spirit” in death , the Evangelist Matthew tells us, “the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Mt 27).” That curtain was torn in two because no sin any longer separated us from God.

After 3 days, Mary and Joseph found Him. This foreshadows the resurrection of Jesus. He would be about the Father’s business, dying and

being buried, then rising to bring life and immortality to light. It is this Jesus who promises to abide with us always.

III. Where do you find God? Just as Mary and Joseph did not really understand the words Jesus spoke to them, I believe that even we struggle and wrestle as to where to find God. To find God, we look where God has promised to be found – in Christ. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. And, Christ is with us in the Word and Sacraments.

In the water and Word of our baptism, God the Holy Spirit works faith so that we trust, rejoice, and find comfort in Jesus alone and the Spirit recreates us in Christ so that we overcome sin and live to do God's will. The Christian life is the life of repentance and repentance is nothing more than a daily return to the waters of our baptism to drown our sinful flesh so that we may rise to a new life in Christ.

“Where two or three come together in My name,” Jesus said, “there I am with them (Mt 18).” Which, My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I believe if Jesus' words in Matthew 18 were translated into English correctly, would read, “there I am with them to forgive sin.” Wherever God's Word is spoken – from the pulpit, the bedside, the graveside, your kitchen table – that Word forgives sin and gives and strengthens faith.

Here, at the Lord's Table, Jesus feeds you with His own true body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and strength for to live a new and holy life of faith.

Friends in Christ, we need never worry or fear that God is not with us. He is with us in His only-begotten Son, Jesus, the Son who came to be about His Father's business – win for us the victory over sin, death, and the

devil. Jesus is our Emmanuel, who brings that victory to us in the Word and Sacraments so that it may be our very own victory.