

Luke 2:48-49 The searching for Jesus ends at God's house.

Christmas 1 December 27, 2009 (Children – Christmas tree: green, points to heaven, etc.)

Grace and peace and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ Amen

God's Word to give us insight into the young life of Jesus, our Savior, is written in Luke 2:48-49.

These are Your Words heavenly Father. Teach us to trust in You by Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Friends, in Christ,

There is nothing that gets our attention faster than a media report that a child is missing. If a child is lost in an open or wooded area, teams of searchers fan out to find the missing one. Other people not near the scene begin praying to God for intervention for the lost child. What joy there is if the child is safely found! No doubt Mary and Joseph had troubled thoughts as they discovered that Jesus was missing from their travel group. What a dilemma it must have been for them until He was found. God has an even greater concern for the spiritually lost. Many people have a religion of empty faith. They have make-believe gods. They have replaced Christ with only human philosophy. They are lost! They need Jesus to save them. They need God's Word to lead them home to safety. Our theme is:

The searching for Jesus ends at God's house.

First, there are dangers to avoid in the search. When Jesus turned 12 years old He was able to travel to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover for the first time. The Jews would consider Jesus a young man who had gone through the rite of instruction so He could join the adults at Jerusalem. Jesus must have been a responsible child, because His mother and foster father had given Him the freedom to be with others on the return trip to Nazareth. It was only as the travel day ended that they realized to their horror that He was missing. They must have wondered, "Did something happen to Him in Jerusalem or did He stop along the travel route? Had He wandered away from the group and been attacked by robbers?" They immediately returned to Jerusalem and assumed that they would find Jesus where they had stayed or at friends' homes, or in the market places. After three days they came to the temple.

Are we in danger from making assumptions like Mary and Joseph? How often do we think that our plans must be God's plans? As long as things on the path of life go smoothly, we think that God is pleased with us and happy with the direction that we are going. But, when God allows something to trouble us, we begin to question His love. We wonder about God's wisdom when we or people we love must go through difficult times. As a pastor, I've seen it too often and it greatly saddens me. I've seen some newly instructed people have a serious problem, and the first thing that some of them do is stop coming to church. I told them that the last thing they need to do is to separate from God. If they want encouragement, then they should continue with the source, God's Word. Don't assume to find help anywhere else.

This leads to the second danger, becoming anxious about matters of life. Mary told Jesus, "*Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.*" v.49 We could rightly understand her concern. God had given them charge of the Savior. And in their viewpoint, they lost Him. What would God say to them if Jesus had been hurt or had died? I'm sure that they prayed and searched many weary hours. What did all their searching give them? They finally found Jesus, only to hear Him say, "*Why were you searching for me?*" v.49

Our sinful nature always wants us to worry about life and to it wants us to think that we can come up with our own solutions rather than look to God. It took Mary and Joseph three days to find relief. How long does it take us before we turn to God? Martin Luther wrote, "If God let us enter into a severe temptation, we should not follow our ideas or human advice, which directs us here and there to ourselves or to others; but we should think that we must look for Christ in that which is His Father's, that is, we should simply and only cling to the Word of the Gospel, which clearly shows and reveals Christ to us. If you really want to comfort others or yourself, then learn to say with Christ in this and all temptations: Why is it that you are running here and there, that you torment yourself with anxious and sad thoughts as though God no longer showed you His grace.... Nothing will come of your efforts. The fault does not lie with Christ and His grace. He always lets Himself be found. Rather the fault lies with you; you do not really seek Him where He is to be found, because you judge according to your feeling and propose to grasp Him with your thoughts. You must come to the place where... God is in charge, where His Word is. There you will find

Him and you will hear and see that ... only His grace and sincere love are for you.”

Second, while we are busy searching, Jesus is finding us. Jesus had a roundabout way of finding us. First, He re-established our relationship with God through his own life. He told Mary, *"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"* v.49 God demanded perfect obedience from Jesus. If He was to rescue His earthly parents and all of us who are lost and dying in our sins, He needed to set His priorities from childhood on. He would always put God's will first. Jesus didn't say that He had decided to go to the temple, but that He had to be involved in the matters of His Father's house. Jesus later said that He had come *to seek and to save the lost.* *Luke 19:10* It was His mission throughout life. He is concerned about the spiritual and moral lives of people. Too often when He miraculously healed people, they only said, Stay with us Jesus and open up a medical clinic. When Jesus miraculously fed people their reaction was: Give us more bread tomorrow! But, Jesus moved on to other places that He might preach a spiritual kingdom and the need for the forgiveness sins. He had come to guide people back to God through His Word.

Imagine what it must have been like to be a teacher in the temple area and have Jesus as a student for the day! Luke states that His parents *"found him ... sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers."* v.46-47 Jesus must have asked some good questions from the Bible! He already had great insight. He would later challenge the teachers who envisioned God establishing a kingdom on earth for the Messiah. This false notion is still being taught by some people today. But, Jesus taught that His *Kingdom is not of this world.* *John 18:36* When He returns in glory with all His angels, this world will be destroyed. *2 Peter 3:10* There will be a judgment of all people. Jesus said, *"A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.* *John 5:28-29* Those teachers needed to have spiritual concern, for God would judge them.

Jesus wants to talk with us about our spiritual needs. We have not been so spiritually minded in committing our lives to God. We have been anxious like Mary and Joseph instead of trusting God. We have too often focused on goals for this life, without keeping God's eternal goals in mind. For our disobedience we deserved God's judgment.

But Jesus' obedience to God at the temple was just beginning. He took His dedicated obedience to God to the extreme of death. While Jesus was on the cross, God had Him become as one eternally lost and He was viciously treated by the devil. What torment Jesus experienced for our sins! But, by His death Jesus became the way that leads to God. The risen Savior instituted baptism as a means to bring you into God's family. The Savior instituted Holy Communion so that He is especially present in God's house. The Savior has sent messengers throughout your lifetime to proclaim His saving truth to you! Mary and Joseph were amazed at the circumstances in the temple. We should be just as amazed every time read God's Word and learn of Christ's sacrifice for us. When we pick up a Bible we are holding *"the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes! ('Romans 1:16)*

God was testing Mary and Joseph through their loss of Jesus so their faith could be strengthened. With Jesus briefly gone, all they could do is trust in God to provide. And God did provide His Son safely back to them. Martin Luther wrote about times when we need His help. "When a heart clings to the Word of God, it can without wavering say: God's Word cannot deceive me, of this I am certain. This is our greatest battle: to keep the Word and to stay with it...."

Our searching is over! Jesus has found us in His Father's house. What a privilege that through His Word, Christ comes into our homes, our church, our Sunday school, and every weekday into our Christian Day school. Thank God in Christ that there is no more worry about being lost! Amen.