

Looking for Jesus? Turn to His Word to be amazed! Christmas 1 December 30, 2018

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We can be certain of God's grace and peace through Jesus, our Lord and Savior who found us. Amen. God's Word to give us amazement about the life of Jesus is written in Luke 2:41-52.

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

Dear Christian Friends,

The Bible mentions several times when Jesus astonished people. It happened when He did miracles like casting out evil spirits, calming a storm on a lake, forgiving a crippled man and then bidding him to walk as proof His forgiveness, and preaching with authority. In today's lesson we find two groups that were amazed: the elite teachers of Jerusalem and Mary and Joseph. Neither could understand what was happening with the 12 year old boy, Jesus, at the temple. When we are searching for answers or want to follow God's will rather than get frustrated by opposing it, let's follow this theme:

Looking for Jesus? Turn to His Word and be amazed!

First, avoid making wrong turns in the search. When Jesus was 12 years old He traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Jesus must have been a responsible child, since His mother and Joseph had given Him the freedom to walk with others in the caravan on return trip to Nazareth. They assumed that Jesus was included. As the day ended, they realized that Jesus was missing. It's a horrible feeling for a parent or grandparent to have a child missing. But, Jesus was the Son of God in humble human form. How would you feel if you were supposed to watch over the one that God sent to save the world and He was missing! The next day, they hastily retraced their steps to Jerusalem and assumed that they would find Jesus where they had stayed. But they found Him on day 3 in the temple.

We can trouble ourselves by making assumptions like Mary and Joseph. We make our plans in life without asking God if they are His plans for us. We assume that everything in our lives and in the lives of people we know will turn out just fine, so why pray to God? We may think that all is going well on our own just as Mary and Joseph did on the first day of their trip. But when God allows something to trouble us like He did for them, then we see our need for His guidance and help. How many times in those three days did Mary and Joseph ask God to guide them to Jesus? For us, God does not send troubles to make us stop trusting or seeking His help. He is not telling us to find help in ourselves and if all else fails go to Him. When our faith is tested, we should stop assuming and seek God's help and pray to Him.

There is a second wrong turn: becoming anxious or worried. When Mary found Jesus in the temple she said, *"Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you"* (v.49). They thought that Jesus was lost. They had prayed and searched for many hours. Jesus answered as their Savior. *"Why were you searching for me"* (v.49)? Jesus sounded amazed with them!

Our sinful nature wants us to worry about life and to think that we must come up with our own solutions rather than look to God. It took Mary and Joseph three days to find relief. How many anxious hours must we have before we turn to God? Martin Luther wrote, "If God let us enter into a severe temptation, we should not follow our human ideas or advice, which direct us here and there to ourselves or to others; but we should think that we must look for Christ... 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 ask 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? 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.... You must come to the place where... God is in charge, where His Word is. There you will find Him...."

Second, while we are busy searching, Jesus finds us. Jesus had a roundabout way of getting to us. First, He re-established a loving bond with God for us by becoming one of us. He was perfectly obedient to God's Old Testament laws: that is why He was in Jerusalem for the Passover. He was obedient to Joseph and Mary, as it states in verse (v. 51). He was obedient to God His Father. That is why He told Mary, "*Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?*" (v.49). God required perfect obedience from Jesus in all things. If Jesus was to rescue His mother and Joseph and all of us who were lost sinners, He had to set priorities. From childhood, He would always put God's will first. Jesus didn't say that He had decided to go to the temple, but that He went there to be in His Father's house. He was seeking the lost during the 3 days that Mary and Joseph were seeking Him. He discussed God's Word to guide people back to God.

Jesus found us by revealing God. Imagine what it must have been like to be a teacher in the temple area and to have Jesus as a student! 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 had great insight. He did not want anyone to have false ideas about God that might cause them to lose their faith. Rather, He always taught the truth so that people would be prepared not only for challenges in life, but for death and the judgment to follow. When Jesus returns in glory with all His angels, this world will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10). There will be a judgment of all believers and unbelievers. 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).

Jesus can help us with our spiritual needs. We have not been spiritually-minded in committing our lives to God and being in prayer with Him. We have been anxious like Mary and Joseph instead of trusting God. We can too often focus on goals on this life, without keeping God's eternal goals in mind. For our disobedience we deserved God's judgment.

But Jesus was obedient to God at the temple. He was obedient to God in all things, even His death on a cross. While on the cross, Jesus suffered as if He were eternally lost. He was tormented for our sins! By His death Jesus' payment for sin leads us directly to our loving God. The risen Savior has sent messengers during the New Testament era to proclaim the saving truth and baptize people!

Mary and Joseph were amazed to find the 12 year old Jesus at the temple. We should be just as amazed every time two or three come together in His name "*there He is with [us]*" (Matthew 18:20). When we hear the gospel we have "*the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes*" (Romans 1:16). God tested Mary and Joseph when they lost Jesus because He wanted their faith in Him to grow! They prayed to God and He answered and gave His Son safely back to them. Our searching is over, too! What an amazing privilege that through His Word, Christ comes to our homes, our church, our Sunday school, and our Christian Day school. Thank God in Christ that we don't need to worry about looking for Jesus! Jesus has found us. He is here to bless us! Don't doubt His Word. Amen.