

Luke 2:40-52

The story is told of an old farmer up in New England standing outside of his place one day leaning against a fence. A smooth young fellow from New York City rolled up in a shiny new car and asked the way to a half-a-dozen different places one after the other, to all of which the farmer, with a dry monotone voice replied, "I don't know." Finally the young fellow, thoroughly exasperated, muttered as he started to drive away, "You don't know much, do you?" Whereupon the farmer straightened up and with a twinkle in his eye drawled, "Well at least I ain't lost."

More people know the answers to more questions today than ever before in the history of humanity. The information highway makes it possible for anyone to know what's going on anywhere in the world any time of day or night. And yet, for all of that, a great many of our leaders in society are willing to admit that ours is the most completely "lost" generation the world has ever known. There is more fear and insecurity; more worry and anxiety than ever before. There seems to be no inner "home" for a great many; no feeling of comfort and safety.

Our Gospel reading for today gives to us who have faith in Christ Jesus our Savior the ability to answer, in the face of all the fear, and insecurity, and seeking of our age, "Well at least I ain't lost." You may not be able to explain the Theory of Relativity. You may not know what lies beyond our solar system or lurks beneath our oceans. You may not know many of the questions and answers on Jeopardy; but if, like the boy Jesus in our text, you have found the Father's House, then you are far ahead of the most brilliant minds of our age, and at least you ain't lost.

A quick glance at Luke 2:40-52 might prompt us to conclude that as His parents were returning home from Jerusalem, Jesus was lost. Mary and Joseph searched for Him among their friends and relatives. They spent three days looking for Him in Jerusalem. When they saw Jesus sitting in the temple, their first thought would have been, "At last we've found Him!" But His response to them clearly points out that He was never lost in the first place.

If someone is where he is supposed to be, is that person lost? If you cannot locate your glasses and you search frantically for them only to discover that they're sitting on the edge of your nose right where they should be; were they ever really lost? Something of yours may be in the right place, but if you are not expecting it to be there, you will still have to find it even though it isn't lost. However, you may be lost without it...glasses, keys, wallet. So our text tells us that Mary and Joseph found Jesus after three days. But Jesus wasn't lost, they were. He was sitting exactly where He was supposed to be sitting—among the teachers of Israel, teaching them the truths of the Word of God. Jesus was not lost because He was in the Father's House doing the work God had given Him to do.

You may have a hundred things to get done today. You may have worries about your financial future. You may wonder what troubles this new year will bring. But you, friend, are not lost because you are in the right place—you are in the Father's House. A great many people would wonder why you're not busy doing your chores this morning; why you're not out enjoying your last day of Christmas vacation; why you're wasting time which could be well spent, sitting instead in this place. They would say that your thinking

is off; that your priorities are mixed up; that you're losing out on life. But you, friend, are not lost...they are, because you are in the right place—you are in the Father's House.

In our day, God's House is an unfamiliar place to many, but it's the right place. It's the one place where you can come with all sorts of confusion in your mind and troubles upon your heart and not be lost. Even if you feel lost, you are not lost when you are in the Father's House.

Just like in our text, people today are searching for truth. They are seeking God. Like Mary and Joseph, they are looking for Jesus. But they will not find Him unless they look in the Father's House. "I must be in My Father's House," Jesus told His parents; and His words are just as true today. Mary and Joseph should have known where to find Jesus. They had no excuse. They should have known where He would be. We today also have no excuse. Scripture is clear that where God's truth is purely proclaimed, there is Christ. Where the Word is rightly preached and the Sacraments are rightly given, there Jesus will be found.

But human nature doesn't want to believe this. That's why Mary and Joseph looked everywhere else first before looking for Jesus in the Father's House. That's why people today look at horoscopes and investigate New Age teachings; that's why cults are always gaining new members; that's why churches where God's truth is purely proclaimed are mostly vacant on Sunday mornings...because it is our sinful nature to search for God's answer to sin, to search for salvation, to search for Christ Jesus everywhere except where He promises to be found—"in My Father's House"—within the pure preaching of His Word and Sacraments.

I don't know why Mary and Joseph finally went to the Temple to look for Jesus. Perhaps they went there on a whim. Perhaps the Temple was the only place left in all of Jerusalem where they had not yet looked for Him. Perhaps in your mind, that's why you are here today. You have questions. You have concerns about your salvation. You have real fears. You may have looked elsewhere. You may have searched the world over to find peace. Friend, you are in the right place, and it's no whim that you are here in the Father's House. "No one can come to Me," Jesus says, "Unless My Father draws him."

Your Heavenly Father wants you in His House because here Jesus is about the Father's business. Here and no place else are real answers to your questions. Here God confronts you with His truth. Yes, you and I are wretched sinners. It is true that we deserve a place in hell. We are not above the Law; it rightly condemns us. But here in the Father's House there is real comfort because Jesus is here. Here is the precious word of Christ Crucified for you. Here is your Savior within the forms of bread and wine. Here in the Father's House is salvation for you because here Jesus stands in the waters of Baptism, and in bread and wine, and through the mouth of His pastor declares to you that your sins are forgiven. Whatever sin weighed heavily upon your conscience as you came in through those doors, your sin is forgiven...now. Jesus declares it so. He died for that sin. He died for you. That's why He must today be in the Father's House, so that as often as you come here, He gives you real forgiveness, real salvation, real peace and comfort.

Like the smooth young fellow from New York City, the man of the world shakes his head sadly and says, "You don't know much, do you?" when he sees that your place is in the

Father's House; when he hears that you trust in the Savior, Jesus. But ask him what life is all about, and where he is going after death, and why, and you'll see who it is that's lost.

There will always be someone looking for you, even sorrowing over you, when you are about the Father's business here in His House. But the wonderful thing to remember is that God knows where you are because He is here with you. As you come to your Father's House He knows where to give you relief from the problems that plague you. He knows where to give you faith in Him who lived and died for you. Here in your Father's House, no matter what others say or think, you are never lost because here God finds you for Jesus' sake. Amen.