

*“Why is it that you were seeking me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”*

These are the first recorded words of Jesus. At the age of twelve, Jesus already knows His true Father. And He knows His mission, even though no one else does. After Jesus speaks these words to His mother, we are told that neither she, nor Joseph, understands what He is saying.

This could be the theme of His entire ministry: Jesus speaks, but the people do not understand. It all begins here at the temple. Mary and Joseph do not understand His words. Years later, His disciples would fail to understand. When He clearly spells out His mission to them, they do not grasp what He is saying, and on more than one occasion. The crowds do not understand Jesus. And, of course, neither do His enemies. From here, when He is a boy, all the way to His crucifixion and resurrection, this theme of “not understanding” continues.

And it ends the way it begins. *“Why were you seeking Me?”* Jesus asks His mother. At the empty tomb on Easter, the angel asks the women, *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”* Here in Jerusalem, Jesus’ parents search for Him, and they are, it says, *in great distress*. This same distress we see in the women at the tomb. And did you notice that Mary and Joseph find Jesus on the third day? So do the women, for after His death and burial, Jesus rises from the dead on the third day.

So, where does this theme of not understanding Jesus and His mission come to an end? Because you understand, don’t you? You understand why Jesus came and what He has to say. I hope you do. In fact, I know you do because that’s why you are here. You understand that Jesus must be in His Father’s house. This is His Father’s house.

Had Mary and Joseph come directly to the temple, the Father’s house, rather than looking all over the city for Jesus, they would not have been in distress. Was Jesus actually lost as they supposed? If you are searching for your car in a massive parking lot, is your car lost, or are you lost? If you eventually find your car, and it was exactly where you had parked it, it was never lost, was it?

The same with Jesus. He is exactly where He is supposed to be. It’s Mary and Joseph who are lost. And yet, our text puts it this way, that *“they found Him in the temple.”* Yet, is this not why Mary and Joseph fail to understand what Jesus says to them? Anyone who thinks that they have found Jesus, does not have the foggiest clue as to who He is and why He has come. It is Jesus’ mission to seek and to save the lost, and not ours to seek and to save Jesus.

This word *lost* in St. Luke’s Gospel refers to those who are dead, in a symbolic way. By way of example: in Luke 15, the father, in speaking of his prodigal son, says to the older brother: *“This, your brother, was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.”* To be lost is to be dead. To be found is to be alive; to be found by Jesus.

You did not find Jesus in your baptism. It's where He found you. It's where He made you alive, truly alive with Him and with all whom He has found. So, here is where this theme of not understanding Jesus and His mission comes to an end: when a sinner who is lost is found by Him.

Remember Zacchaeus? He was up in his tree when Jesus was walking by. "*Hurry and come down,*" said Jesus, "*for I must stay at your house today.*" Coming to Zacchaeus' house, Jesus said: "*Salvation has come to this house...for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*"

Zacchaeus now understands Jesus and why He has come. Zacchaeus was lost, dead in his sin. He was curious about Jesus. He wanted to get a glimpse of Him. But Zacchaeus did not understand Jesus and His mission.

It's when Jesus received Zacchaeus, when He forgave this wretched sinner, bringing salvation to him and to his entire household, that Zacchaeus knew why Jesus had come. He came to seek and to save sinners like him. The same Jesus who must be in His Father's house, must go to Zacchaeus' house. It's His mission. It's why He came.

And it's why He has come here to you. If you are a sinner in need of being found by Jesus, and saved by Him, then here is good news for you. Today, salvation comes to your house. Jesus' mission is not simply to seek everyone and their uncle out there. He seeks you. And He knows exactly where you are. Your sins cannot hide you from Him, because Jesus forgives your sins, all of them. However lost and dead in sin you may be, through His Word of Absolution, Jesus finds you, returns you to the life you have in your baptism, forgiving you of everything you have done wrong.

And those whom Jesus seeks, He saves. "*Salvation has come to this house,*" Jesus said of Zacchaeus. It's because Jesus came to his house. Salvation flows. It flows from Jesus' wounds on the cross to the Word of the Cross, and to the Sacraments, proclaimed and given here in the Father's house. It flows to you whom Jesus came to seek and to save.

Here in the Father's house, you are not lost. You are forgiven. You are found. You are alive with Christ and in Christ. To understand this is to understand Jesus and why He has come. Amen.