

Lectionary C December 27, 2015 First Sunday after Christmas  
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, IN  
Pastor Roberta Meyer

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26  
Psalm 148  
Colossians 3:12-17  
Luke 2:41-52

### **Silence after the Storm**

I got it last night. I finally understood something I have asked myself for a long time. “What is this story really about—this story where twelve-year-old Jesus stays behind at the temple without telling his parents? Why would a boy that age stay with a bunch of old men anyway?”

Well, let me tell you a little about my Christmas holiday. Between shopping, preparing for the Christmas Eve service, and spending time with my grandchildren, I have had a very busy week before Christmas. Then finally Christmas day came. All my children and grandchildren, plus my dad and my sister and her husband, and my brother came to our house. There was eating and gift giving and playing games. Then we blew up two queen sized mattresses in our living room for a wall to wall slumber party.

Saturday morning, we all got ready to go to Dave’s family Christmas. More preparing, more wrapping, more hustling and bustling. More celebrating with family.

And—yes, I have to admit it, there was family drama, too. Has to be, right? That goes with it. Misunderstandings, conflicts, the clashing of wills. I guess that is what my grandmother meant when she said, “We are having too much togetherness!” Maybe this sign would have helped.

Anyway, after two full days of “togetherness,” all of a sudden about 8pm last night, we received our last hugs and kisses good-bye from our grandchildren and children and the door closed.—  
Silence.

Ahhhhh. The solitude was soothing. Time to reflect. Time to just be. Time to write this sermon...

It was in this solitude, that followed the busyness of the celebration that I realized why that time in the temple was so important to Jesus.

Just like my house before Christmas was the center of a lot of action, Jerusalem was the center of the celebration of the Passover. Thousands of people coming and going, visiting the temple, mingling, hustling, bustling, clashing, clanging. It was a whirlwind of activity swirling around keeping everything going at full speed until...until that moment when the last person left the temple. Solitude.

Just the ones who lived there remained. The craziness of Passover was over. Now the Jewish leaders and teachers were left in their quite empty space to reflect on the time. They were left to sit together and peacefully talk about what had taken place the last few days.

Ahhhh. The solitude was soothing. Time to reflect. Time to just be...Time to talk to this amazing young boy, time to be with God's word. No wonder, they lost track of time. I mean, Jesus and the temple leaders. Peace-giving solitude trumps everything else. I know that time stands still for me when I'm in that peaceful place in my heart, everything else seems irrelevant. That is where Mary and Joseph finds Jesus, in that quiet place, talking and praying about the thing he loved the most, God the father.

And Mary and Joseph? I can just imagine what that three days had been like for them. Realizing their son was missing—searching for three days to no avail. I know what it is like to lose track of a child for a few seconds, like the time my toddler daughter, got away from me in a grocery store. It is the kind of frantic that starts like a stab in your heart and flows through your body like a lightning strike that sends a burning sickness through every limb of your body until it sticks in your throat like a big lump.

Mine was only a moment, and then I heard over the PA system in the store, "Would Roberta please come to the customer service desk. Your daughter Amy has misplaced you." There was a rush of relief followed by a surge of anger and then, realizing my name was heard all over the store, there was a twinge of anger at the little critter for humiliating me like that.

I wanted to hug her and wring her neck at the same time.

Yes, I know Mary and Joseph must have felt that and much more. They must have been exhausted, search for their son for three days. I know I wouldn't rest until I found my son. I am sure they kept going day and night.

And then they walked into the synagogue. Oh, the emotions—Yet the Silence. Ahhhh. They had to sense the peace. There he was, "*in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions...*"

That space, after the panic, after the excitement, after all the drama, that space of silence and peace is where Mary found her strength to keep going. There would be many more times when she would experience confusion and panic as the mother of Jesus. Spending time reflecting in the silence after the storm is how she survived. The story says, "*His mother treasured all these things in her heart.*" Mary recognized that she was a witness first hand to the growth and development of God's Son. "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.*" Mary could treasure the crazy times as times of learning and growth for her son.

So that is the message that spoke to me about this passage today. Treasure the time after the chaos. Treasure the peace after the storm. Spend time pondering in silence about this Christmas season. What does this mean to us?

Who is lost in this story - Jesus or his parents? Should they have known, like the boy Jesus expressed, "*Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?*" Can we be so lost in the busyness of life, that we forget where Jesus is?

"Do we find Jesus, or does Jesus find us?" When we ponder over this story, I truly believe that Jesus finds Mary and Joseph. Lost in their humanness, frantic about human things, twelve-year-old Jesus brings his parents to the new reality, not ruled by law, but by Gospel. "*Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?*" In this simple question, the boy Jesus is proclaiming who he is, the Son of God. Things are changing, rules are breaking. Everything is new.

Does Jesus open door for us this way, too? New realizations, strange new ways of thinking that crosses over what we used to know to be true? Stretching us, growing us. Showing us how *to grow in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.*

So that brings us to this question. "Who is doing the seeking? God or us?"

It is a paradigm shift, when we understand that we are not the center of everything, that God is and God seeks us and makes it possible for us to seek God.

It is a part of growing up, maturing. And that is why Jesus was born a little baby boy, to show us what growing up means.

Our Colossians text tells us that we are chosen by God. And so, like I told the children, there is a certain way we should dress. And don't worry, I'm not trying to set any kind of dress code.

No, God's dress code has nothing to do with what garments we wear on our bodies. God's code has to do with what we wear in our hearts. Through Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection, God dresses us "*with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.*" And most of all we are given "*the peace of Christ [to] rule in [our] hearts,*"

And that brings us back to Mary. This "following Jesus" stuff is really tough work. It leads us to chaos at times. The storms of life will throw everything out of whack from time to time. And we can trust God's promise to be right in the middle of our craziness. Then after the craziness calms down, we can sit in silence like Mary. And we can *treasure all of it in our hearts.* And I think that is the meaning of this sign that the bishop gave us at our last Synod Assembly and we have seen every Sunday since. "Keep calm and follow Jesus". Amen.