

Title: Where Can We Find Him?

Subtitle: Setting your heart on the pilgrim way.

Video URL: <https://youtu.be/0nYt7BSGP6M?si=gu2FTQDsnd9srUyo>

Today's Gospel covers the only story recorded in the Bible concerning our blessed Savior's childhood. Luke says, "*The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.*"¹ Then he tells us, "*His parents went to Jerusalem yearly at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve, they went up according to custom.*"² His age as a twelve-year-old was significant because in another year, as a thirteen-year-old, Jesus would officially become "of age," initiated as a full synagogue member and received as "a son of the Law"³ at his bar mitzvah. So this twelve-year-old Jesus, brimming with energy and excitement, was brought along to observe and learn as much as he could about the heart of Israel's religious life in preparation for adult responsibilities.

His youthful imagination must have exploded as the dazzling images of Passover were celebrated. And that was not all. Jesus' devout family stayed a whole eight days in Jerusalem until the whole of the feast was "completed"³

Eight days to a young child can seem like a very long time. "For one day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere,"⁴ as our Psalm for today reminds us. He could not get enough. So much so that "when the feast was ended, as they were returning, "The boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it."⁵

Accepting the incarnation at face value means that Jesus was genuinely a twelve-year-old. Therefore, he was capable

¹ Luke 2:40

² Luke 2:41-42

³ Mishnah , Niddah 5:6

⁴ Psalm 84:9

⁵ Luke 2:43

of *unknowingly* causing his parents distress. He must have been so caught up in the immense experience that he did not imagine staying in the temple would cause anyone alarm.

Regardless, the situation threw his parents into alarming anxiety. After searching for him for three days, ***“they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and answers.”***⁶ “And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, ***“Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.”***⁷ The answer he gave them is the earliest recorded words of Jesus. It was in the form of a question: ***“Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”***⁸

Now, the last words of this question are literally, as the margin of the Revised Version tells us, ***“in the things of My Father.”*** And that idiomatic form of speech may either be taken to mean, as the KJV does, ***“about My Father’s business,”*** or with the Revised Version, ***“in my Father’s house.”*** The latter seems the most relevant rendering since the folly of seeking him elsewhere is emphasized. **But the locality carried the occupation with it, for why must He be in the Father’s house but to be about the Father’s business?**

“And they did not understand the saying he spoke to them.”⁹ Despite her great humility and faith, it would take years for Mary to finally put it all together.

There was a divine plan for Jesus as he transitioned from his childhood into adulthood. It marks his purposeful

⁶ Luke 2:46-47

⁷ Luke 2:48

⁸ Luke 2:49

⁹ Luke 2:50

commitment to discover and obey God's will and fulfill His mission. Being about his Heavenly Father's business is what Jesus wanted to be about, even as a child. And as such, he wanted spiritual wisdom and insight into what this meant. He sensed a divine plan that he was chosen and predestined to fulfill. (This, by the way, is what Paul indicates is also true for believers who have been adopted as God's beloved children.¹⁰) But discovering that plan takes effort; it takes all the wisdom and insight that Jesus, as a young boy, could gather from others who were well-versed in Holy Scripture. None of us, our Lord included, are meant to discover God's will alone. We are divinely created to live in relationships with others who have gifts and discernment from God that we need.

Did you ever think we, too, have a mission and destiny to fulfill? One of the most common questions that I was asked as a hospice chaplain by people who knew that their time on earth was short went something like this, "I don't know why God still has me here, but I believe he has a purpose for me. I just don't know what it is."

I am convinced that people often miss finding their purpose in life because they think it involves something grand and glorious. We all crave a life of significance. But let's not forget that doing small things can make a bigger difference than we may ever realize.

When Mother Teresa was interviewed after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, she said, **"I can do no great things, but only small things with great love."** As I reflect on Mother Teresa's words, I can't help but think about the meaning of the

¹⁰ See Ephesians 1:5-6

incarnation, where God did not just take on a human form but also humbled himself and took on the form of a servant.

Therefore, when we think about doing the will of God, we should not overly glamorize it. And it starts by reducing what God may call us to do into bite-size, day-size realities.

In his book, “Mastering Life,” Robert Morgan wrote, “As followers of Christ, we have inherited the Family Business. We’re partners with Christ in His Father’s business, created to accomplish a set of purposes that God has established for us to do. ...It means we start living for Christ with all our hearts today, wherever we are, looking around to see what we can do for Him. Near you today is a need to fill. Close at hand is a person to cheer. Throughout the day, you’ll find tasks only you can tackle. You can reach people no one else will see”¹¹ (end of quote).

But like any task, getting started is usually the most challenging part. And I believe that means asking God for his direction and help as we begin each day in prayer.

The Psalm appointed for today describes the desire and longing of a worshipper who has set his heart “...*on the pilgrim way.*”¹² It was to get on and stay on this pilgrim way is what Jesus said he “must” be about. It is what M. Scott Peck calls “*The Road Less Traveled*” in his book by the same title. It is a call to grow in grace. It is a call to grow out of spiritual childhood into adulthood. It is a call to take risks and shoulder

¹¹ Morgan, Robert J., *Mastering Life Before It's Too Late: 10 Biblical Strategies for a Lifetime of Purpose* (pgs. 14-15). Howard Books.

¹² Psalm 84:4, BCP p. 707

responsibilities that are not easy in a world filled with distractions.

Therefore, we need to pray as Paul directed us in our epistle today, that the Father of glory may give us *“a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what the hope to which he has called you.”*¹³

The prophet Jeremiah believed this and wrote, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*¹⁴

So, let’s be about our heavenly Father’s business as we seek to fulfill his plan for our lives. *Amen.*

¹³ Ephesians 1:17-18

¹⁴ Jeremiah 29:11