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**December 30, 2018**

**In My Father's House – Luke 2:41-52**

Let us pray: God of mercy, grant the Word you speak this day may take root in our hearts, and bear fruit to your honor and glory, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Parents, have you ever left your children somewhere by mistake? What was your reaction? Has anyone ever been left somewhere by mistake. As a child, my father left my sister and me in a car with the engine running on a hill in the road.

I had the bright idea that I was going to drive the car while daddy was in the store. My sister tried to prevent me from putting the car in shift, but I was determined to drive daddy's brand new car.

Well, I put the car in the drive and off we went flying down the hill, screaming and hollering all the way. Thank goodness dad came out of the store just in time to jump in the car and put his foot on the brake. It had to be divine intervention that my father was able to stop a car going down a steep hill. Has anyone else been in that situation before?

Well tonight, I want to talk about a time when Jesus was left behind. Imagine that - losing Jesus, leaving the God of the universe behind. I mean a brat like me I can understand, but not Jesus - this special child. Mind blowing isn't it.

I want to tell you, though, that leaving Jesus behind is a relatively easy thing to do and I wouldn't be surprised if quite a few people here tonight don't know where Jesus is in their lives. Are you one of these people? Stick with me and find out.

Some of you may have heard Luke's account of Jesus' childhood before. Actually, this is the only story in the gospels about Jesus between his infancy and his public ministry as a man. Some have argued that the story is a legend created by the early church to fill in some of the gaps in their knowledge of Jesus' life.

First of all, we should be aware that in the second and third centuries many legends arose about the boy Jesus and were put into numerous apocryphal gospels—like the one found From the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (2nd century) which says:

"1 When this boy Jesus was five years old, on a certain day when there had fallen a shower of rain he went forth of the house where his mother was and played upon the ground where the waters were running:

and he made pools, and the waters flowed down, and the pools were filled with water. Then saith he: I will that ye become clean and wholesome waters.

And straightway they did so. 2 But a certain son of Annas the scribe passed by bearing a branch of willow, and he overthrew the pools with the branch, and the waters were poured out. And Jesus turned about and said unto him: O ungodly and disobedient one, what hurt have the pools done thee that thou hast emptied them?

Thou shalt not finish thy course, and thou shalt be withered up even as the branch which thou hast in hand. 3 And he went on, and after a little he fell and gave up the ghost. And when the young children that played with him saw it, they marveled and departed and told the father of him that was dead. And he ran and found the child dead. But the parents of him that was withered took him away, bewailing his youth, and brought him to Joseph and reproached him: "What a child you have who does such things."

After this again he went through the village, and a lad ran and knocked against his shoulder. Jesus was exasperated and said to him: "You shall not go further on your way," and the child immediately fell down and died. But some, who saw what took place, said: "From where does this child spring, since every word is an accomplished deed?"

Here is one more example from the Arabic Infancy Gospel:

One day, when Jesus was running about and playing with some children, he passed by the workshop of a dyer called Salem. They had in the workshop many cloths which he had to dye. The Lord Jesus went into the dyer's workshop, took all these cloths, and put them into a cauldron full of indigo.

When Salem came and saw that the cloths were spoiled, he began to cry aloud and asked the Lord Jesus, saying: "What have you done to me, son of Mary? You have ruined my reputation in the eyes of all the people of the city; for everyone orders a suitable color for himself, but you have come and spoiled everything."

And the Lord Jesus replied: "I will change for you the colour of any cloth which you wish to be changed"; and he immediately began to take the cloths out of the cauldron, each of them dyed as the dyer wished, until he had taken them all out. When the Jews saw this miracle and wonder, they praised God.

After such stories, the account in [Luke 2:41-52](#) seems a bit drab—and that is precisely what speaks in favor of its authenticity. It does not appear to be motivated by a desire to overplay Jesus' uniqueness. So now let's talk

about losing Jesus. It was part of the law that all Jewish men were to go to the House of God - the Temple at least 3 times a year.

Exod 23:14-17 says that they are to find themselves in God's house on the occasion of the 3 main feasts - Feast of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. But as people spread through the Roman Empire, this sometimes became impossible due to distance and so it became tradition for Israelite men to go to the temple at least once a year on one of these feasts.

You became a man at the age of 13 years when you completed the "Son of the Covenant" ceremony. The Jewish Bar Mizvah ceremony now takes its place. It was considered good preparation for boys aged 11 and 12 to go with their Fathers on this pilgrimage to get familiar with the requirements of the Jewish laws.

We read here that Joseph took his family down to Jerusalem every Passover to fulfill his duty. Apparently, Joseph and Mary were very religious and made the three day hike from Nazareth every year. It was on one of these journeys that they left Jesus behind.

Some, on reading this account would find Mary and Joseph totally irresponsible and neglecting of their parental duties. Imagine – traveling for a whole day and not knowing that you've left Jesus behind. But before you condemn them, consider that in ancient times, people traveling used to go in caravans.

It was much safer to travel with a lot of other people and besides the time went faster. And the children would have a ball playing with each other around the caravan. But not only this, the women usually traveled separately to the men.

You see, the women and young children were slower than the men and so they would usually set off in a group first and then the men would leave a couple of hours later and catch up to them ready for the night's camp. You can imagine that because Jesus was almost a man, Mary thought that he was naturally with his father. And Joseph thought the opposite. It was only at the end of the day when they came together that they realized Jesus was missing.

Can you imagine the terror that gripped their minds as they frantically searched for Jesus. They'd lost the savior of the world, the Son of God. How could this be? The problem was that they were engrossed in their own business. They had been obeying the law and going to worship God at the temple.

They were being very religious, but in their attempt to fulfill the requirements of God's law, they lost the one and only Christ. Why? Because

they were involved with the journey home. They left Jesus behind because they were distracted by getting home. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.

Even though they later realized that they forgot Jesus, there is implicit faith Mary and Joseph have in their 12 year old son. If he had been an irresponsible child, his parents would never have gone a whole day without knowing his whereabouts. They trusted him and knew he had good judgment.

This suggests that Jesus' motive in staying behind was not carelessness or disrespect. Evidently, he intentionally let them go in order to demonstrate something more forcefully. Eventually, "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 his answers.

And when they (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 looking for you anxiously (literally: in pain)." And he said to them: "Why is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house (or about his business)." And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. But, He was in his Father's House taking care of his Father's business.

Let me make just a few observations. Jesus knew and loved the law from an early age, and that in the very city where he was lynched 20 years later, he was approved at the age of 12. Or perhaps he wasn't approved.

Maybe the teachers of the law did *not* care for the implications of Jesus' answers; but then a 12 year old is no threat. They can pat him on the head and say, "Smart kid," and return to their hypocrisy. How easy is it to be distracted from God's priorities.

We fill our lives with all sorts of good things – just like Joseph and Mary did, but we leave Jesus behind because even these good things, aren't necessarily Jesus' priorities. I read a story about a young lad that gets saved at camp, and he returns to his unbelieving home and tells dad about Jesus.

The dad smiles condescendingly as if to say that's nice for kids. But then the boy grows into a man and is aflame with the Spirit and becomes a minister. The dad can't be indifferent any more. "He who is not with me is against me" ([Matthew 12:30](#)).

Have we left Jesus behind because our priorities in life are not His? Mary and Joseph had been doing some of this. They had been worshipping God and glorifying God in their service. But they were ready to move on.

Rather than being obsessed with our own priorities and programs, we need to take the time to ensure that these are aligned with God's priorities and his timing in my Father's House. Amen.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Son. Help us to keep him at the center of our lives and may we never leave him behind. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.