

Let's Go Deeper...

Wednesday, December 30

We explored a one-of-a-kind passage last Sunday. [Luke 2:41-52](#), titled “The Boy Jesus in the Temple” in my Bible, is the only snapshot we have of Jesus’ growing up years. Matthew and Luke tell us about his birth. All four gospel writers tell about his three years of ministry from ages 30-33. We only have eleven verses in Luke that tell us anything about Jesus from age 2 – 30.

Let’s go deeper with two thoughts we explored together in worship, the importance of **habits** and the experience of “**losing Jesus.**”

Habits: Luke tells us Jesus’ parents went up to the Temple “**as usual**” (NRSV) for the festival of the Passover. The old RSV translation says Temple-going was “**according to custom.**” In sum, Jesus was raised in the habit of going to church.

41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. **42** And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

“We first make
our habits, then our
habits make us.”

John Dryden

I suggested on Sunday that our habits mold us into the people we become. It’s been said, “Sow a thought and you reap an act; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.” Bottom line: We need to be careful in choosing our habits. Over time, they’ll spell our character and destiny. So, if we make it a custom to practice “the

habits of holiness,” we’ll reap a character and destiny of “**growing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and human beings**” (Luke 2:52).

Given that, I invite you at the cusp of a new year to examine the habits of your life—especially the “holy habits” that cultivate spiritual growth. How well-formed are they? Whether it’s the habit of worship, Bible study, generosity, prayer or serving, we do well to make a New Year’s resolution to make a habit of them.

Here’s a thoughtful article that delves into the formation of habits and the difficulties thereof:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonselk/2013/04/15/habit-formation-the-21-day-myth/>

“Losing Jesus”: I thanked my colleague Rev. Michael Swartzentruber at South Elkhorn Christian Church for observing that Mary and Joseph “lost Jesus” for a time. Michael asked, ‘Is it not true that we sometimes go through periods of “losing Jesus” during our journeys of faith?’ Sometimes we have to go through seasons of doubt, spiritual aridity, drifting from the Temple and the church and

orthodox theology and who-knows-what-else before we can come out on the other side to a faith that is chastened, refined, and more mature. “Losing Jesus” may be part and parcel of a more mature and vitalized faith.



Someone told me once how hand-me-down clothes never fit right and neither does a hand-me-down faith. Sure, we can wear the faith of those who raised us for a while, but if we never tailor those beliefs and practices to our size, spirits, and minds—make their faith ours— it’ll either be too baggy, too tight, or downright unwearable.

I closed Sunday’s sermon by noting that Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple. I can only speak for myself, but in the seasons of my life when I’ve been searching, seeking, wrestling (which is quite often), I’ve found Jesus in the church. In the great hymns of the faith. In the Holy Scriptures. In the people of the church. In the encouragement to open-handed generosity and open-minded inquiry and open-hearted compassion that are so refreshingly countercultural in this narrow, grasping, xenophobic world. I’ve found Jesus in the beauty of holiness of a century-old sanctuary, so rare in a day of planned obsolescence when anything more than a year old is deemed “old hat” and in need of tearing down and replacing with something newer, brighter, shinier,... shallower. Ah, for the depths of transcendence and mystery!

Here is a link to a lovely piece John Lynner Peterson sent to me of a woman who “lost Jesus” for a season, but found him again... in church.
<http://memargaret.com/prodigal-daughter/>

I’m praying we all will find Jesus in the old Temple called Central in new and renewing ways throughout our bicentennial year of 2016.

Let's Get Ready **for This Sunday...** We'll be celebrating **Epiphany**.



The arrival of the wise men.

The bright-shining star.

The gifts brought from afar.

The text will be **Matthew 2:1-12**.

A blessed New Year to you and yours,

Pastor David Shirey