

Year C 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas

January 2, 2022

8 am Church; 10 am Chapel and Livestream

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 84:1-8; Ephesians 1:3-6; 15-19a; Luke 2:41-52

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## Jesus Lost and Found: The Gift of Presence

Good morning. As you can see, I'm not Ed. He's a little under the weather, so I have the honor to offer a brief reflection I wrote yesterday for this, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas. We are still in the midst of the 12 days of Christmas and will celebrate the Magi discovering the Christ child and Epiphany next Sunday, yet in our Gospel passage today, we find ourselves looking for Jesus and not knowing where he is. How did we lose him so quickly? He was just born a few days ago it seems ... but our Gospel passage today invites us into the experience of Mary and Joseph who have lost Jesus. Perhaps at the start of another pandemic year you might feel Jesus is a little hard to find as well.

Where is Jesus? Mary and Joseph ask. Where is our son? Where can we find Jesus, separated and lost from us? Have we lost him too soon? Have we become distracted and rushed off and left him behind?

Mary and Joseph look among the relatives and friends traveling together at the end of a long week of worship for the Passover in Jerusalem. Luke tells us Jesus' parents are observant Jews, going up to Jerusalem for this annual festival and so this is a story that begins like any other year—like our celebration of

Christmas, it happens every year, we come to the pageant, to Christmas Eve services, then we go home, nothing out of the ordinary. But perhaps Mary and Joseph have gotten distracted by other children, other people, other cares and issues around them, so much so they forget where their focus needs to lie.

Jesus was already a child of great curiosity and the definition of inquisitive, so interested in everything in front of him. I imagine him learning about everything with such attentiveness—baking and vegetable gardening from his mother Mary, stonework and carpentry from Joseph, fishing from uncles and cousins, spinning wool into thread and weaving on a loom from his grandmother, reading scripture and learning about the faith of his ancestors from his mother and father. I imagine Jesus getting lost in any interesting place where he was learning from people's love of their calling—an aunt's bakery or neighbors' fig orchard. Everything in all of creation is loved by Jesus and given meaning and beauty by his attention.

So it's no surprise that Jesus would get lost or forgotten at the temple. He was so interested in learning from the wisdom of others and developing his calling as a lover of God and teacher of God's wisdom to others.

Jesus lost track of time because he was completely and utterly present to where he was.

He was so present to the people in front of him, so engrossed and invested in exactly where he was that he forgot to find his family and return home. He found

himself to be completely at home in the temple and that presence was what astonished the teachers of the scripture—a person so young so present and wise, learning so deeply, asking thoughtful questions that prompted the rabbinic teachers to go deeper in their own wisdom and learning. Jesus is a true student, a lover of wisdom and a gift to those around him—awakening in them new love of learning about God.

When his family finds him in the temple after a search of several days, he seems surprised by their confusion at having trouble finding him. Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house, or about my Father's interests? Perhaps he assumed they would know he would be at the temple—the whole family had just spent quite a lot of time at the temple for the Passover festival. Where else might he be? Jesus is completely at home in the temple and we're invited to sit down and learn beside him.

Jesus seems to invite his mother and father to stay with him too in God's house, to see themselves among the learners of wisdom. The story right before today's lesson is also about Jesus in the temple, when he was taken for his dedication and where he is blessed by the two prophets Anna and Simeon. These prophets have modeled for Jesus and Mary and Joseph what it means to make your home with God.

Obviously very few people today can be like Jesus, the rabbis, the prophets Simeon and Anna, praying, reading scripture, learning and studying the faith every waking moment of the day. But perhaps we can take a reflection and application for our own moment—the child Christ is within us, giving us the desire to seek after God, to put our faith into application every day of our lives. To make our home in God and have God make home in us. Jesus and the prophets Anna and Simeon were so present to God’s speaking into their lives they were filled with supernatural wisdom. They model for us true presence, holy awareness.

I find Jesus’ presence to being in the temple an invitation for this new year.

At the start of a new calendar year, one that is beginning with continued pandemic uncertainty, I wonder if God is inviting us into being present to ourselves, others, God’s work in our hearts, lives, communities. A posture of presence brings blessings of gratitude, holy awareness, peace, and simplicity. All of you today, in person and on the livestream, have offered your presence and your time and holy being to God by taking this time for worship and reflection. What a gift we might offer today, this week, this year if we too can be present and at home with ourselves and in God and offer our presence to the people, the work, and the service God invites us to this year.