

Luke 2:41-52, Colossians 3:12-17, 1st Sunday After Christmas December 30, 2018

A couple of years ago my daughter Lisa and I made the mistake of taking 3 grandkids to the Minnesota State Fair. Not a good plan. Collin was 10, Clara 6 and Mackenzie 5. It takes three hours to get there so everyone is antsy and bugging each other before we even get through the gate. Then they are hungry and want 18" pronto pups on a stick, costing \$12.00 each. They take a couple bites, say they are gross and throw them away. They don't want to look at anything just go on rides. We try to look at the animals and some other things but they aren't interested, just get to the rides. Finally we gave up on trying to do anything else.

So we get to the rides and it's hot, it's crowded and the rides are really expensive. We bought the tickets and told them each they could go on four rides. they all wanted to go on something different of course. Collin chose bumper cars, then Mackenzie wanted to ride the elephant ride so we walked over to that. When we got there, i noticed no Clara with us. Talk about a panic. there is a huge crowd and we lost one kid.. Collin and I started back tracking to see if we could find her. We found her, she had stopped to watch kids on a small roller coaster. She was completely oblivious to the fact that we had kept walking. It probably took us about three minutes to find her. Yet I still can remember how scary that was. It can happen so easy, if you are distracted and take your eyes off from them just for a few seconds.

I can't imagine how Joseph and Mary felt losing Jesus for three days. But I can certainly understand how it could happen. There would have been hundreds of people leaving Jerusalem after the Passover. Relatives and neighbors traveled in groups for safety and to make time go faster. Men would walk together and women would walk together with the children. At twelve years old Jesus could have walked with either group, or maybe even with a group of young boys his age. When the first day of the trip was over the families would get back together to eat and sleep. That is when they discovered Jesus was nowhere to be found. I'm sure they checked with everyone and found that he hadn't even started out with the group. He never left Jerusalem.

Considering tht they walked about 20 miles that day, that meant a 20 mile walk back to the city before they could even start looking for him. Can you just imagine the thoughts and feelings of those poor parents and they walked back to Jerusalem / Scared wondering what would happen to their boy. He had no money, What would he do? Emotions going from "Dear God, let him be OK" to "Wait till I get my hands on that kid."

They found Jesus in the temple three days later. He's in the temple talking with the teachers, completely oblivious to his parents panic. Mary is mad, as would any mother be, you can hear it in her words, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

His reply is the very first time in the gospels we hear Jesus speak. "Why were searching for me? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house."

What strikes me about this is that Jesus was not lost. He knew exactly where he was. It was Mary and Joseph that had lost sight to Jesus. Maybe lost sight of who he really was.

They lost Jesus when they took their eyes off from him, just like I lost Clara when I took my eyes of her. How does that happen? We get distracted. I was distracted at the fair by two other kids and going to the next ride. Mary and Joseph were distracted thinking about their long journey home. It was about 60 miles. I'm sure Joseph had work waiting for him, Mary probably would be glad to be back at home where cooking and taking care of the family was easier.

It's an interesting story but what can we take from it? Why did Luke feel it was important to include in his Gospel? .. If we learn anything from this story it is that we too need to keep our eye on Jesus so we don't get lost. Jesus is never lost but we can lose sight of him in all the worldly concerns that surround us every day. We

fill our lives with all sorts of things, many of them good things, but we end up leaving Jesus behind because we worry about our priorities and not what Jesus' would have us do.

I hope everyone had a good Christmas. We had family home and a new baby born on Dec 18th. Happy times. Yet I think somehow Jesus got kind of lost in our celebrating. Do you ever feel the same? Between all the lights and decorations, Santa Claus, shopping, gifts, cookies, parties do we lose sight of why we are celebrating? Does Christmas get to be more about the celebrating and less about the cause for celebration? It's so easy to do, get distracted by all the busyness that is going on around us. So how do we stay focused? How do we keep from losing sight of Jesus? It's no easy task. It takes some effort on our part.

One way is to keep His words in our minds and in our hearts. If Jesus, the Son of God, needed to study scripture and discuss it with others who also studied, so do we. There is no magic way to know God's word and his purposes for our lives. It's unlikely that it will come to you in a bolt of lightning or get a visit from an angel. An angel did visit Mary and Joseph and they still didn't really understand.

Someone once said that a Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't. Studying scripture, along with prayer and fellowship with other Christians is one way we keep Jesus in our sight.

Last summer at the Presbyterian General Assembly it was decided to try and make the church a Matthew 25 church. Matthew 25 is the part of Jesus sermon where Jesus tells those around him... "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me."

If you think you have lost Jesus look for him among the "least of these". You will find him where people are hungry, you will find him among the poor, you will find him where people are sick, you will find him among refugees and strangers, you will find him in prison.

When we make a real conscious effort to show love and care to our brothers and sisters, no matter who they are, where they are from, what they look like or what language they speak.. then we are on track to find Jesus.

Paul wrote the letter to Colossians that we read a portion of this morning from jail. He wrote because he was concerned that there were those in the church that had lost sight of Jesus. Some worldly influences had become part of their beliefs and that turned them from the truth that is found in Christ.

He tells the Colossians to remember what is important. To clothe yourselves with love, forgive each other, let the peace of Christ rule your hearts, be thankful, let the word of Christ dwell within you richly,.... and whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

So my friends, as you make your New Year's resolutions to: Eat healthier, loss weight, exercise more, spend less and save more.... or whatever you may have on your list... Put at the top, to keep your eyes on Jesus. To follow him in all that you do and all that you say.

May God's blessings flow down on each of you in 2019.

Let's pray...Most Holy God, Help us to keep Jesus, his life and his message in our sight. May we not be so distracted by our own selfish priorities that we become lost. Draw us into community with all of your children and give us the wisdom and strength to follow Christ where ever he may lead. And always, always call us back when we stray from your way. We pray through the holy name of your son our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.