

# *A Spiritual Spring for the Week*

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Sermon Text: Luke 2:41-50

Sermon Title: "Being about Our Father's Business" (Baptism of Our Lord)

Morrow Presbyterian Church, Morrow, GA

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I don't know about you, but if Jesus was my son, he would have been grounded for a month. If my son or my daughter had gone somewhere without my knowing it... there would have been some big trouble!

I trust our son, when it comes to him wondering off once in awhile. When we go hiking in the woods or shopping in a store, he goes off and loses himself like any other restless teenager. Our daughter will turn 13 soon, and I am trusting her more and more with wondering off, although I am a concerned father and never want her to get too far. As children turn into youth, parents need to give them some breathing space, some operating room; although we will always be concerned parents. But if my youth were lost for days in the woods, I would go into panic mode. If they went missing, my wife and I would be beside ourselves, overcome with worry and even anger, because we would have lost control of our youth and would have no way to find them or help them.

Before they got married and being faithful Jews,

Mary and Joseph had to visit the Temple of God in Jerusalem every year in order to keep the Passover feast. They both lived in Nazareth, and Nazareth is miles away from the capital city of Jerusalem, so every year they understood the drill of packing bags and loading camels, and traveling toward the Temple in order to uphold one of the greatest and most holy traditions of their people. Now Mary and Joseph are parents, and when they pack bags and load camels they have to think of their children.

Mother Mary gave birth to Jesus through extraordinary means: it was a virgin birth. But it is Christian tradition that Mary and Joseph had other children after Jesus. In fact, the disciple James is designated as “the Lord’s brother,” as Paul calls him in Galatians 1:19. There are other possible young siblings with Jesus, but the point here is that Mary and Joseph had a family to care for. They felt responsible for all their children, when it came to providing a home and clothing and food for them. When the time arrived, they all traveled to Jerusalem to observe the Passover feast.

So when the Feast is complete and everyone is traveling back home, it is assumed that all the children are returning home as well. Nobody has been left behind. But a day into the journey back, Mary and Joseph discover that their oldest son, Jesus, is

nowhere to be found. All the other children are present, but for some odd reason Jesus is not.

Now, it might sound strange to read that Mary and Joseph lost Jesus. Didn't they have him within eyeshot or earshot at all times? My family and I traveled to Maryland over the holiday break, and rest assured my wife and I never lost contact with them going up and coming back down. My sister and brother-in-law have five children, and we were ever mindful of where they were, when we went to the movies or the mall.

During Jesus' time, when people made pilgrimages to Jerusalem to honor Jewish holy days, they traveled in large groups. There is safety in numbers, and there is greater fellowship in numbers. Mary and Joseph and Family did not travel alone, but with relatives and neighbors and friends from their town. The whole caravan meandered over hills and through valleys until the journey was finished. Most likely the children and youth visited with friends and relatives along the way, possibly staying in their tents when night came, possibly riding on their camels when the day came. Mary and Joseph would have allowed their children to visit others, with the assumption that somebody was always watching out for them. Somebody always knew where they were.

However, on this trip back home, nobody knows where Jesus is. It takes a full day to interview everyone in that caravan to discover that Jesus is probably back in Jerusalem, somewhere. Obviously panic sets in. The journey back to Jerusalem must have been hair-raising. Will they ever find Jesus again? He may be 12, one year removed from becoming an adult, but God the Father still gave Jesus to the care of Mary and Joseph. They have got to find him.

Three days it takes. Three days of searching! And they find him in the Temple. That is where the Passover was observed, and this is where Jesus remains. He knows the Feast is finished – Jesus is just hanging around, debating Scripture with learned men and curious onlookers. He is the Son of God, so he could do whatever he thinks is right. If he wants to remain in the Temple, who are we to argue?

But Mother Mary and Father Joseph see it differently. Jesus is still a child. Jesus is still their Son. Jesus still scared the tar out of them by going missing. So the rebuke from Mary is natural. The anger she expresses is understandable. She shows that she cares deeply for Jesus by her reprimand. As I said before, if it were my son or daughter, feathers and fire would have been flying.

The Scottish theologian, William Barclay, says that the passage we read today is “one of the supremely important passages in the gospel story.”<sup>1</sup> Notice what happens when Mary rebukes her son: “*Your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.*” We are the authority you must respect. Now notice how 12-year-old Jesus responds, “*Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?*”<sup>2</sup> *The Father in heaven* is my authority. A major shift has occurred. Jesus is not being disrespectful of Mother Mary and Father Joseph. When it comes to being the Son of God, what the Son does is obey the Father.

In another translation of this story it says, “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” In all things Jesus was about carrying out the business, the will, of the Father. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus says time and time again that he and the Father are one. The Father is in me, and I am in the Father. The Father who sent me has commanded me what I should speak. No one comes to the Father except through me.<sup>3</sup> So naturally, Jesus is going to be in the Temple, worshipping and speaking about God the Father. It comes to him as easily as eating or breathing.

It is curious that Mother Mary and Father Joseph

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<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Luke 2:48, 49.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John 10:30, 14:11, 12:49, 14:6, respectively.

do not understand what Jesus is saying. Were they not shown time and time again that Jesus was God's only Son. Didn't an angel visit both Mary and Joseph to confirm the holy birth? Didn't wise men come from a far-off land to present gifts to a King? Didn't Simeon and Anna tackle them at the Temple, and preach about the greatness of their Child? Didn't Mary "ponder in her heart" a couple of times the spiritual events that were taken place all around her? Yet, Mary and Joseph still didn't understand what Jesus was doing in the Temple, a 12-year-old boy holding court with a group of older, learned people. Maybe they were still getting over the deep worry of losing Jesus for three days, and then finally finding him.

Jesus was about carrying out the business of God. When questioned about his actions, he stands up and answers boldly: "I am doing the will of my Father."

We can get pretty sure of ourselves from time to time. We can be sure about carrying out of our business, our own will. "I don't care how many more hours I have to spend on this," we might say, "I have to finish this. Don't care what it takes; this has got to get done." "I don't care what people think," we might say, "this is how I feel. Don't care what people say, I am not going to change." We boldly live our lives as we see fit. Sometimes we think we deserve something and

say, "I have worked so many hours over the last few months, I definitely deserve that vacation. I have been working so hard all week, so I definitely deserve that night out." Many times we are about our own business, and we tell people what we think with some rudeness in our voices.

Have we ever felt the same way as Jesus in the Temple of the Lord? When the Father gives us an idea that he wants us to run with, do we run with it as confidently, as boldly? Or do we just wait for our brains to invent ideas and then run with them, because they are really fun and feel good?

The Father and the Son were one, along with the Holy Spirit. It may not be the fashionable thing, and it may not be the popular thing, but Jesus did anything the Father wanted him to do. At one point, the thing was to stay in the Temple. The thing to do was to teach curious people about the ways of God, ways they had never understood before. Great spiritual details were explored, and people had a better understanding of what God the Father wanted them to do.

There are times in which we have to say, "It is the will of my Father to do this or that. As the Father and Son are one with the Spirit, I try to live as one with God as well. It may not be the fashionable thing, and it may not be the popular thing, but it is what God wants me to do. I cannot ignore it or push it aside. I

am about the business of my Father.”

We may not want to forgive somebody of something they did to us. It hurt what they did or said to us – we cannot easily get over it. We may even think we should pay them back with some similar unkindness. Make them hurt for a time. We may not want to, but we know the thing to do is to forgive. Let go of the hurt each time we think about it. Pray for the person who hurt us, because they might not know how much they hurt people on a regular basis. Move forward without the bitterness. Live each day not with anger but with joy. Forgive and be about the business of our Father.

It might not be the fashionable thing to show care toward another person. The person smells of body odor and cigarette smoke. The person constantly asks for food or money or a ride to the store or a ride to their home. The person always seems to take and never seems to give. The politicians in Washington DC would call this person a lazy drain on the American economy. But we help the person out. We provide what we can for that person who always seems to be in dire need. We show some form of care and be about the business of our Father.

It is not the popular thing to do: admit when we are wrong. We can't do that. People will take us as weak. They will take us as unreliable and



untrustworthy, and it may cost us our jobs or status with others. The fact is, though, we are all weak. We don't have all the answers. Some of the answers we have just might be wrong (not wrong in the sense that people will get injured but wrong in the sense that we don't have all the correct information or expertise.)

Brothers and sisters, I have a Masters in Divinity, a Doctorate in Ministry, and a pastor ordination through the Presbyterian Church, and I am weak. I don't have all the answers all the time, and sometimes they are not correct.

But that doesn't mean I cannot try and find those answers. It doesn't mean I give up being a pastor. Sometimes we must admit that we just don't know, but together we can help each other to know. Together we can discern what God wants us to do or say, and move on from there. It is not a popular view, especially when we believe our leaders must always be strong, must always be flawless. But admitting weakness and lack of knowledge, and fully relying on Christ to be our Strength and Guide is being about the business of our Father.

If my son or daughter ever went missing, fire and feathers would fly. But what if they said to me, "But Dad, I was carrying out the will of the Lord. What I was doing was all about the business of my Father."

Such a response would catch me off guard. Such a response would set me back. And then I would have to consider such things in my heart, and pray that not only would my son and daughter always be about the business of their Father, but also I would be alongside them.