

Luke 2:49-50 (Second Sunday of Christmas—Series C)

“Among the Things of the Father”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT

January 2, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text is from the Gospel lesson recorded in Luke, chapter 2:

⁴⁹And [Jesus] said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Do you not know that it is necessary for me to be among the things of my Father?” ⁵⁰And they did not understand the word which He spoke to them.

He was missing for five days! His parents must have been out of their minds with worry. On the first day’s journey from Jerusalem, they figured Jesus was with their relatives and friends. This would have been perfectly normal for those traveling home after the Feast of the Passover. But when Mary and Joseph didn’t find Him with the family, they made the day journey back to Jerusalem. They searched high and low for Jesus for three days. They finally found Him in the temple of all places, “sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and asking them questions.” Luke tells us that “all who heard Him were greatly astonished at His understanding and answers.”

What an amazing relief for Joseph and Mary to find Jesus again in the temple. These parents loved their son and were, like any of us would have been, worried sick. Luke writes that when they found Jesus in the temple with the teachers that they were “dumbfounded.” They were shocked, stunned, flabbergasted. They just couldn’t believe that He was here after all this time. But to Jesus, this was sort of a no-brainer. “Why were you looking for me? Do you not know that it is necessary for me to be among the things of my Father?”

This is by no means a saying of disrespect to either Mary, His mother, nor to Joseph, His earthly father. Jesus speaks about who He is as the divine Son of God and what He must do as the Son concerned with God the Father's business in the Father's house. This clearly shows that Jesus is not ignorant of who He is, as some have portrayed Him over the decades. Jesus is not someone who has to "discover Himself" or find out who He really is, or thinks He is. Jesus is the divine Son of God in human flesh and blood. He humbled Himself by becoming fully human. The eternal Son in flesh and blood now had to grow and develop just the way you and I have over the years. The all-knowing God had to continue to "advance in wisdom and stature."

Jesus assumed our humanity and He lived it out. Stepping into the world of biology, God the Son was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. He was a zygote and then a blastocyst, then an embryo and next a fetus. He was born in the humbleness of little Bethlehem and laid in a manger as a newborn infant. As a toddler, magi from the east presented Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Jesus grew as a child, and in our text at 12 years old, He was sitting with the teachers in the temple, talking theology! Jesus would continue to grow and develop. The next time we meet Him in the Gospels is at age 30, at the beginning of His public ministry, with His baptism in the Jordan River by John.

Jesus knows who He is. He knows His Father in heaven and the mission that He has received from the Father to be the Savior of the world. As God the Father told Joseph through the angel Gabriel, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21 ESV). Jesus means "Yahweh saves."

And so Jesus must be “among the things” of His Father. Jesus must be present in the house of His Father, where the Father’s business is transacted, among those to whom this business has been entrusted. In the temple, sacrifices were repeated daily for the sins of the people. This is Father’s business, forgiving sins by accepting the sacrifice, receiving the blood of animals as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. As the writer of the Book of Hebrews explains, “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb. 9:22 ESV). But we are also told, “For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. . . . But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb. 10:1–4 ESV).

With every bloody sacrifice in the temple, you would see the consequence of your sin—death. The animal’s blood was a substitute for your life. The blood of a sheep or goat or bull was offered to God in your place. Its shed blood made satisfaction for the guilt and punishment of your sins until the time of the next sacrifice.

Talk about rubbing sin in your face! Precisely! This is the work of God’s Law; it shows us that we have not loved God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, nor have we loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have all fallen short of the glory of God, missed the mark, failed completely to be the people God demands that we be in His commandments (Rom 3:23). Take for example the setting of our text. Jesus is in the Father’s house, learning and growing in the Word of God from those called by God to teach that Word. How often do

we despise and neglect God's Word by failing to gather together in worship to receive His Word and Sacraments? God tells us not to neglect "to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:25 ESV). We are, like Jesus, to devote ourselves to God's Word in private devotion and public worship, and that means being here in God's house, with your sisters and brothers in Christ, hearing the Word and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in His Supper. It is vital for believers to gather together with fellow Christians in our Father's house, to be among the things of our Father. No, not among animal sacrifices, but in the presence of the one, true Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Jesus Christ.

As true God and true Man with ordinary human blood and flesh, Jesus lived a perfect life under God's Law and then He died the death we deserve. Shedding His own blood on the cross, Jesus offered His life in exchange for the life of the world. His blood is the required blood covering for the world's sins, for your sins. In Holy Baptism, Jesus sprinkles us with His most holy blood, blood that He has taken in the presence of His Father. He sprinkles us on the outside to cleanse us and pardon our sins, and to set us apart as His holy people to serve God in our callings, our vocations, of parent, child, sibling, citizen, teacher, and student. In the Lord's Supper, He sprinkles us internally to set us apart to serve in the heavenly temple with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven, praising God for our Blood Covering—Jesus, the Lamb who was slain for us.¹

¹ *The Lutheran Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 2117.

You and I gather together in this congregation, then, to receive the gifts of God which He has for us in the Gospel, the gifts purchased and won for us by Jesus' death and resurrection. The Lord Jesus is present here in His Father's house, here in this sanctuary as His Word is proclaimed and His Sacraments are administered. Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." Jesus comes to us by the power of His Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace and He freely gives His gifts and blessings, chiefly the forgiveness of sins. In worship, our Shepherd Jesus, speaks through the mouth of the pastor whom He has called to care for our souls. So the Word of God is not simply information, but the Word actually delivers what it says—the forgiveness of sins. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also eternal life and salvation—the gifts Christ freely gives to you in His Word and Sacrament here in the Father's house, among the things of the Father: Gospel, Baptism, and Supper.

You need not search high and low for Jesus. He is where He has promised to be, among the things of His Father. He is present by the power of the Holy Spirit in His Gospel Word and Sacraments. He is present here for you with forgiveness, eternal life, and the strengthening of your baptismal faith. You are empowered by Christ through the Spirit to more faithfully hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it, especially here among the things of God the Father with the children of the Father who live by faith, your sisters and brothers in Christ. Amen.