My Story – Part 2

# Going Back for Jesus

## (Luke 2:41-50)

Welcome to all of you worshiping with us today. We’re continuing the series “My Story” and we are really going back to the basics. We began last week talking about “Remembering Jesus,” and so we’re talking about the simple practices or disciplines of a believer in Christ. This is important because the Bible is a book that calls us to action, that’s why James tells us,

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says… and continue to do this, not forgetting what you have heard, but doing it…” (James 1:22-25).

In other words, knowing the Bible doesn’t get you anywhere if you don’t put it into practice.

You know, just think about it for a minute, imagine how much better our lives would be if we did the things that we know that we’re supposed to do. You know, like, we know that drinking water, eating vegetables, getting our protein, and exercising results in a healthier body. But we don’t always do the things that we know we should do, because knowing and doing are two different things.

And so, what if we were to put the word of God into practice? What if we were to look at what the Bible says about prayer and worship? What if we were to be still, listening for God’s voice, and began doing those things he tells us? I wonder if maybe then we might stand a chance of living the story God wants us to tell?

You know, that has always been a big question in my mind, how do we live a story worth telling? How do we live a life that results in the kind of story that we want to tell future generations? And as I was thinking about that this week, I realized that what really matters is who is writing the story, and I was reminded of a Scripture in Hebrews chapter 12. It’s almost too familiar, so familiar that we almost miss it, but in verse two the writer of Hebrews said,

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith…” (Hebrews 12:2).

And so, it makes sense that we should let Jesus be the author of our lives, because he created all things, and all things exist for him. Therefore, we can live the story that God wants to tell, living a story worth telling, as we fix our eyes on Jesus, because he is the author and perfecter of our faith.

The problem is that what happens to so many of our lives is that we lose sight of Jesus, because we don’t fix our focus on Jesus. In fact, I want you to think about that for a moment, because many of you have goals, you have plans for 2022, and that’s a good thing; but what you already have with you is better and more important than what you want or where you’re going. And I want you to think about that, because if you lose what you’ve got, going after what you think you need, your story is not going to end well.

In fact, I want you to turn with me in your Bibles, to the gospel of Luke, chapter 2, because I want to show you something that you may not have noticed before. We’ve had our time of worship, we’ve lifted our voices in praise, we’ve worshiped him with our giving, but now we come to receive from him, to hear what he will say to the church. And so, we open the door to hear what he would say to his people, reading from Luke chapter 2, verse 41,

“Every year (Jesus) parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom” (Luke 2:41-42).

“After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends” (Luke 2:43-44).

“When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers” (Luke 2:45-47).

“When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you” (Luke 2:48).

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them” (Luke 2:49-50).

Last week we talked about remembering Jesus, but what about the other side of the coin, what about forgetting Jesus? As we read this text, one of the things that stands out to me is the movement of these verses. And I am amazed that Joseph and Mary have become so distracted that they have been separated from their 12-year-old son, their special promise from God, so valuable that they hid in Egypt for two years to protect him and keep him from being killed. And now Jesus has been abandoned, his safety totally compromised, because he’s been left by himself in a fairly large city, without his family, without any support, and for four days.

To be abandoned at 12 years old can be overwhelming, to be abandoned by your mother is something that sticks with you all of your life. Of all the things that could have happened to Jesus, because the one thing that God said was not good was,

"It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18).

And so, even though there may have been a good reason for it, to be abandoned by your mother or your father affects how you see things. To be abandoned affects your approach to life itself, how you need people, and how far you will go to get their attention.

God had entrusted Joseph and Mary with his son, they were responsible for his safety and his upbringing, and whatever God brings into your life requires something of you. And so, it makes me wonder what in the world was going on in their minds, what was so big, what was so important, that it caused Joseph and Mary to forget about Jesus? And as I’m thinking about how they could forget Jesus I’m reminded of the context, because Luke tells us,

“His parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover” (Luke 2:41).

And so, the feast of the Passover was an annual memorial to commemorate the Jews deliverance from Egypt. It was to help them remember where they came from and we’ve talked about how this became their point of reference as God reminded them over and over and over again,

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:2-3).

And so, that was the story, that’s what was happening, they were celebrating the feast of the Passover, remembering that there was an innocent animal that gave up its life so that they might live. And it’s as they took the cup and broke the bread that they are recognizing the Lamb that was slain, the Lamb that paid the price for their redemption, but the problem was that somehow in the process of celebrating the feast that they lost the Lamb of God.

In other words, it was a lot like Christmas when we’re supposed to be celebrating the birth of Jesus, but we find ourselves so distracted by wrapping gifts, preparing food, and traveling to visit family that Jesus is the last person on our minds. And so, in this text we are reminded that its possible to go to church, to be celebrating Christmas, and not even notice that Jesus is gone. And so, in Luke chapter 2, the real meaning of the Passover was lost in the ceremonies, the rituals, and the festivities, as Joseph and Mary gathered together with their family and friends. They had become so absorbed in peripheral things that they lost sight of the main thing, they forgot Jesus, they forgot their 12-year-old child.

And so, they had gone to celebrate the Passover, bringing Jesus, bringing the real Passover lamb to celebrate the shadow of greater things and they left him behind. In other words, they brought their redeemer to celebrate their redemption without recognizing that their redemption is not where they were going, but their redemption is what they already had with them. That’s why the Bible reminds us,

“Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the Festival … with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

And so, Jesus is not just a reflection or a shadow, he is the feast, he is the Passover lamb, their kinsman redeemer, their mighty God and everlasting Father, but he was just 12 years old, and they forgot Jesus.

What God gave them was going to bless them, Jesus was going to affect generations, but we must understand that he was just 12 years old. In other words, Jesus came in the flesh just like we did, he learned to walk one step at a time just like we did, and so he grew up just like we grew up. In other words, he came as our brother, sharing the human experience with us so that whatever challenges and difficulties we face in life; the Bible says,

“We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

And so, he was born just like we were born, he learned to walk just like we learned to walk, he grew up and went through adolescence just like we grew up and went through adolescence, and so he can sympathize with us in our weakness; to because he experienced life as we know it, he was tempted in every way just as we are, and yet was without sin.

The Bible says, “After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it” (Luke 2:43).

And this is so important, because anything you want to talk to Jesus about, even how it feels to be forgotten, how it feels to be abandoned and left behind, he knows because he went through everything you will ever go through.

And so, his parents celebrated the feast, they packed up and started traveling and neither his father nor his mother noticed that he wasn’t with them.

“Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends” (Luke 2:44).

In other words, they had traveled for an entire day before they even noticed that Jesus wasn’t with them. They started out going to the Feast of the Passover, not recognizing that he was the whole point of the Feast, and now they’ve lost him, because they forgot Jesus.

It sounds so harsh, it seems unthinkable, but maybe we’re not so far removed. Some of us haven’t noticed that he is gone either, that’s why he is standing outside of the church knocking, that’s why he’s calling out in Revelation chapter 3,

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in…” (Revelation 3:19).

I could never understand how Jesus could be standing outside of the church, outside of the place that bears his name, but now I see how easy it could happen, to get distracted by all the details, leaving him outside knocking on the door, forgetting Jesus at the feast of our own celebrations.

And yet, the greatest tragedy of all is that we didn’t even notice, and so Jesus is left alone in this big city, at the busiest time of year, and I know anybody can lose a child for a minute or two. I’m not making excuses, but most parents know that feeling of turning around in the store and your child is gone. You know, they were right there, and now they’re missing. And the police won’t even let you file a missing person’s report until they’ve been gone for 24 hours.

The Bible says that Joseph and Mary went back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. He had been forgotten, left behind, left alone in this big city for days. We don’t know what he ate or where he slept, maybe he just wandered the streets, and some of you know what that’s like. You’ve been on your own when you weren’t supposed to be, you’ve had to care for yourself when you shouldn’t have had to, and Jesus knows what you went through, he understands, because he knows the feeling of being forgotten.

“After three days (Joseph and Mary) found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers” (Luke 2:46-47).

And so, they found Jesus in the temple and “when his parents saw him, they were astonished” (Luke 2:48).

“His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you” (Luke 2:48).

Did you notice what happened? Jesus’ parents blamed him for their own negligence just like we often do. Mary said, “Why have you treated us like this? She blamed Jesus like he did something wrong, but they left him behind, they weren’t paying attention, and now they don’t want to assume responsibility for what they lost.

It’s kind of like blaming Jesus for a relationship or a marriage that you lost because you failed to invest in it, you neglected it, you didn’t give it any attention, and now you act like Jesus did something wrong. Or maybe you say that tithing doesn’t work, that God isn’t faithful to his promise, but you refuse to admit that you lived above your means, you bought whatever you wanted, and so when you get in financial trouble you blame Jesus.

Jesus’ parents blame him for being lost at the feast, “Why have you treated us like this?” And they don’t assume responsibility for losing Jesus, and yet it was 24 hours before they even noticed he was gone. They lost Jesus and I’m afraid that some of you may have lost sight of what is important, but you’ve got to own that, because if you don’t own it, if you don’t take care of what you have, if you don’t go back for what you left behind, it may be gone. And Jesus was just 12 years old, he was right there, but the distractions of your own celebrations caused you to take your eyes off Jesus and now you’ve lost him.

I wonder how long it’s going to take you to notice that he’s not with you like he was when you were worshiping with tears running down your cheeks? You know, when was the last time you were so focused on worshiping Jesus, praising Jesus, that you didn’t even care who was watching, because you and Jesus were having a moment together? I wonder how many more Christmases are going to pass with all the festivities, but you have forgotten Jesus?

Today there are some of you who need to turn around and go back to get what is most important. You need to go back to the temple, back to Jerusalem and search for Jesus until you find him. You need to make up your mind that you’re not leaving until you find him, because he’s waiting on you. He told his mother,

"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?” (Luke 2:49).

In other words, he’s waiting on you in the place where you left him, the place you stopped going, the place you thought you didn’t need any more, the place where you said you got hurt, they went back and found him in the temple. They found them in the house of God, they found him in the church, they found Jesus and I pray that you would too.

And so, here’s a question for you, what can you do? What can you start doing to get back on track, back to Jesus? Well, he said it this way in Revelation chapter 2,

“You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first” (Revelation 2:4-5).

Some of you might have an insecurity, an addiction, or an inappropriate pursuit of material things. You might struggle with unforgiveness, you might have relationships that are not what they should be, and so you want to go find Jesus. You want to fix your focus on Jesus, because he is the author and perfecter of your faith, and so you want to go back and do the things you did at first.

Some of you have been floating along aimlessly through life, and so you need to start doing something that’s going to help redirect your story. The Bible says it this way,

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is” (Romans 12:2).

And so, maybe you may need to commit to praying every day, if you’re married, not just praying by yourself, but start praying together, because it’s amazing what praying together will do for your marriage. It’s hard to be mad with each other when you’re praying together. It’s hard to look at pornography when you know you are going to pray with your wife later. It’s hard to hold unforgiveness in your heart when you know you’re going to pray with your spouse.

Or maybe you need to start making God’s word a priority, discovering God’s will, renewing your mind as you feed on his word. Maybe you and your spouse need to start reading the Bible together, or even better, going to church together. You know, start making church a real priority in your lives and in your family. Not just going when it’s convenient, and not just going, but getting involved and using your gifts to make a difference. Contributing to it financially, supporting what God is doing, and being a prayer warrior for the church, engaging in the faith community as you make Jesus a priority.

I don’t know what you need to start, I don’t know where you left Jesus, where you abandoned him, but chances are you do. And so, if you seek him, if you call on him, he said when you come and pray to me, I will listen to you,

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 29:12-14).

And so, what is the story that God wants you to tell? Would you let him be the author of your story, living from the pages of his book, living the story that he wrote? If you seek him, not forgetting Jesus, but fixing your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, he will help you write your story.

And one day, you’re going to tell a story about a chapter in your life where you sensed that you were missing something, that you lost your focus, and you had forgotten Jesus. But then you sensed that God was calling you to go back and by faith you did and because of that one decision you will be able to tell the story that God wants you to tell. And so, my prayer is that you would have the courage to go back and to decide to start a discipline that will change the direction of your story.

Would you seek the Lord with me in prayer?

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January 30, 2022

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*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*