

**Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan**  
**First Sunday after Christmas**  
**December 27, 2015**  
**Luke 2:41-52**

*Every year his 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. 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. 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. 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."*

*"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.*

*Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

I want to share an interesting fact which caught my eye last Sunday. It was an article about the productivity of the typical office worker in an 8 hour work day. The article mentioned the fact the typical office worker gets interrupted every three minutes. These interruptions can be someone else's fault (phone ringing, getting a text, office worker stopping in to visit) or they can be your own fault (checking email, facebook, looking at the weather, snack break).

I am sure a lot of you can relate to being interrupted with work whether it is your own fault or someone else's fault. However, the interesting part of the story is the fact it usually takes people an average of 23 minutes to get back to working at their task which was interrupted. The story's point was interrupted people don't get a lot of stuff done because their focus is divided. These people try to do a lot of things at once, but end up getting nothing done.

I bring this number up because I want to use the topic of focus to explore our gospel lesson today. Our gospel lesson is the story of the boy Jesus in the temple. **"Every year his 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. 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. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him."** This story is the only story we have of Jesus from the time he was born until he was 30 years old. It takes place when Jesus was 12 years old and attending his first Passover. He went with his parents Mary and Joseph. They had a good celebration, but Mary and Joseph leave Jesus behind in Jerusalem.

They stop and look for him at the end of the first day, and they can't find him. They make the decision to go back to Jerusalem to try and find him. They look all over the city for three days, but they can't find him. Finally, they decide to check the temple and an unusual sight greets them. **"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."**

They find Jesus in the temple with what appears to be a large crowd around him where Jesus is having a lively discussion. He is sitting in the middle of the Jewish religious leaders discussing God with them. Not only is he asking questions, but he is answering them too. It was an astonishing sight and it left Mary and Joseph stunned and didn't know what to make of the scene in front of them. **"When his parents saw him, they were astonished."**

Mary finds her voice and scolds Jesus. **"His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.'"** Mary and Joseph had been looking for Jesus the last three days. Their search left them worried and upset. Mary wants an answer from Jesus about his behavior. She wants to know why Jesus didn't come with them or tell them he was staying behind in Jerusalem.

Jesus doesn't give her a direct answer, but asks her a question instead, **"'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'"** What is Jesus' point with his

question for Mary? He wants Mary to think about what Jesus should be focused on in this world: should his focus be on earthly things or following his father's will? Jesus is illustrating to Mary that he is focused on his mission of going about his father's business on earth and serving as the savior of the world.

The fact he is the savior of the world is Jesus sole focus his entire life on earth. This story illustrates Jesus' amazing focus on this fact. He was 12 years old, but he understood the reason he was in this world. He was here because God the Father sent him into this world to be its savior. He wasn't simply Mary's son. He was more than that. He was her savior and the only way he could be her savior was by focusing on being the savior his father wanted him to be

Jesus knew what was at stake if he lost focus on this fact. He knew if he lost his focus on being savior of the world for even one second that his mission earth would be a failure. He would have failed at keeping God's law perfectly and his life wouldn't matter because it couldn't substitute it for ours. We would all be lost and condemned to hell because we would have no way to pay for our sins. Their debt would crush us and doom us to God's eternal punishment.

The stakes were high, but Jesus never lost focus on his mission here on earth. He carried out his father's business perfectly here on earth from the moment he was conceived until the moment he died on the cross. Our lesson shows us this focus, **"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'"** Jesus, even as a 12 year old boy, was focused on carrying out his father's will and he made sure he was following his heavenly father's will by spending time with him.

Jesus focus on the fact he was the savior of the world stands in clear contrast to Mary's focus in our lesson. **"His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.' But they did not understand what he was saying to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart."** Mary was focused on the fact Jesus was simply her son and not her savior. This is why she didn't understand the reason Jesus stayed behind in the temple.

Mary's failure to put her focus in the proper place serves as a warning to us. What is the warning for us? I want to share with you a conversation we had in catechism class. I asked the kids which day was more important: Christmas or Easter? We talked about and came to the conclusion that they were both equally important since you couldn't have one without the other. This question led to a different conversation which contains the warning about proper focus.

I asked the kids what Satan could do to try and take our focus away from the purpose of Christmas and Easter. We talked about this for a little bit and I was extremely pleased with our conversation. The students recognized Satan uses things like presents and trees, chocolates and bunnies to try and pull our focus away from the real meaning of Christmas and Easter. Why would Satan do this? They rightly said he does this to pull our focus away from the fact Jesus is our savior from sin.

Satan's main focus in this world is to incite mankind to rebel against God. Satan gets great pleasure when he sees man, who is the crown of God's creation, rebel against God. He hates the fact Jesus is the savior of the world because Jesus' death and resurrection destroys the rebellion Satan is leading. Satan

has lost and he doesn't like people knowing this fact. So he does all he can to pull our focus away from Jesus' victory and focus on him instead of Jesus.

One of the ways he does this is by attacking the meaning of Christmas. He tries to make it all about getting and receiving presents. He tries to make it about spending time with family. He does all he can to pull our eyes away from the fact Christmas is about the fact God's son came into this world and destroyed him. Why does Satan try to pull our focus away from Christ? He does it because he knows we are rebel against God when we fail to focus on Jesus as our savior.

How can we prevent this from happening? We can listen to Jesus question and apply it to ourselves.

**“Why were you searching for me?’ he asked. ‘Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?’”**

Jesus spent time with his heavenly father to maintain his focus on being savior of the world. How much time do we spend with our heavenly father focusing on the fact he sent his son to save us? Is it more than five minutes a day? Is it when we get up or go to bed? How much time is it?

The best way for us to maintain our focus on the fact Jesus is our savior is by spending time with him. He wants us to have a relationship with him. He uses his word to communicate with us. He uses his sacraments to strengthen our faith. He invites us to pray to him and bring our problems to him. He uses these things to build our faith. These are wonderful tools which will help keep us focused on the fact Jesus is our savior.

Yet, what often happens when we use these things? Doesn't Satan try to distract us? He tells us we are too tired to read God's word or pray at night. He tells us family time is more important than worship. He reminds us about our errands which need to be run or laundry which needs to be done or what we want to eat for lunch while at church. He questions whether bread and wine or water really can forgive sins. He works his best to remove our focus from Jesus.

How can we ever remain focused on Jesus? **“Why were you searching for me?’ he asked. ‘Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?’”** We can thank God Jesus never lost his focus on us. He has defeated Satan and we are his. We can pray and ask him to drive Satan away from us and to put our focus squarely on him. Amen.