

Sunday November 12, 2023

First Lesson: Proverbs 3:5-6

Gospel Lesson: Luke 2:41-52

Sermon Series: Questions that Move Mountains: Why Were You Searching for Me?

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- We are beginning an 8 -week sermon series called “Questions that Move Mountains?” This will be a sermon series that will prepare and usher us into the upcoming Advent Season that will begin the First Sunday of December; that will invite us to unpack the questions that Jesus either asked or inspired; with the hope that our repeating First Lesson of Focus ; Proverbs 3: 5-6 that says to *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.* In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths; will take root into our hearts.
- For in briefly looking at the first lesson that will serve as the desired outcome for this sermon series, to **trust in the Lord** wholeheartedly means one should **not** rely or lean **on** our own

understanding, for human insights are never enough.

- For God's ways are incomprehensible (Isa. 55:8–9; Rom. 11:33–34); **yet our faith teaches** us that God is trustworthy.
- Therefore, what our first lesson is naming is that **all the wisdom a person may acquire** can never replace the need for full trust in God's superior ways.
- The word **Heart** in Hebrew refers to one's emotions (Prov. 12:25; 13:12; 14:10, 13) whereas the word insight is referring more often to one's intellect (such as understanding, 10:8; discernment, 15:14; reflection, 15:28), or will (5:12).
- Thereby making the outcome for us to consider and hopefully experience **in time and over time**, is that **as a person** trusts in the Lord and acknowledges God, **in all God's ways**, we will find that God makes our **paths straight**.

- For me this idea of **our paths being made straight** means more than guidance; **it means** God removes the obstacles, **making a smooth path or way of life**, or perhaps better, God will bring us to our appointed goal.
- Thereby making this an admittedly very lofty goal for a sermon series to achieve!
- However, my faith informs me that God can do this for our Church and God can do this for our souls specifically through these questions that Jesus raises and/or inspires through the weekly texts that we are about to encounter together!
- Therefore, the first question that I am inviting us all to unpack is the question that Jesus asked of his mother and father, **“Why were you searching for me?”**
- Beginning with the Scriptural and traditional part of this passage, so that we can gain a better

understanding of what is going on in the historical context of this story;

- It is important for me to name that this story only appears in the Gospel of Luke.
- However it is a relatable story of how a parent loses their child to really no fault of their own.
- But before getting to the climax of the story, it may be helpful for me to give some background on how these events came to be.
- Every adult male Jew was required to attend **the feast of the passover** each year.
- It was held in March or April, as Easter is celebrated today, because the Jewish months always began at the time of a new moon.
- As I reflect on Rev. Bonnie's 4-week sermon series on Women that Move Mountains, I would be remiss if I did not name that women were not obliged to go to the three great annual feasts (Deut. 16:16)—**just**

another tidbit of biblical history that ostracized women in both worship and leadership;

- Nevertheless both of the **parents** of Jesus, being unusually pious, **went every year.**
- When Jesus was **twelve years old**, He accompanied his parents to Jerusalem for the Passover.
- Every Jewish boy at the age of thirteen in fact was supposed to go through a solemn ceremony by which he becomes *Bar Mitzvah* (Aramaic for “Son of the Law”; the Hebrew is *Ben Torah*).
- There is some evidence that in the time of Christ it might have been held when a boy was either twelve or thirteen.
- So this may indeed have been Jesus’ *Bar Mitzvah!*
- For some scholars believe that the age of 12 indicated the age in which Jesus would have entered into puberty , combined with the thought

that the Jewish laws would have accommodated this 12-13 age range.

- If Jesus did have *Bar Mitzvah* at this time, it would form a perfect setting for the incident described here.
- For at that ceremony a Jewish boy became a member of the congregation of Israel.
- What this means is that he could worship with the men in the synagogue, instead of having to be with his mother in the secluded, curtained space assigned to the women.
- He was no longer called “little” but “grown up.”
- The modern counterpart is what is known as Confirmation in some churches.
- All of this background brings us up to the story before us; for when they had **fulfilled the days**—the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—they started back home.

- Since there was a large group of people from Nazareth traveling together Mary and Joseph did not know that Jesus had stayed behind in Jerusalem.
- They supposed that He was in **the company**—the caravan from their home town.
- It was not until they stopped for the night that they discovered His absence.
- For it was not safe to travel in the dark, so much so that they had to wait until the morning to start back to Jerusalem.
- It must have been an anxious night and time for His mother.
- **After three days** (v. 46)—one day traveling toward home, a second day returning to Jerusalem, and part of a third day looking for Him—they found Him in the Temple. He was sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and also asking them questions.

- People were **amazed** at His understanding (v. 47).
- Making the pinnacle of this text for us as the listener and reader of this story to consider why should His parents have been **astonished** to find Him in the Temple?
- Hence why Jesus asked his harried mother—(vs 49) “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”
- **Reflecting on the Wednesday Night Applying the Sermon to Life, there were a number of shared and lived experiences that identified with both the parents and Jesus in this story.**
- Some of the class participants reflected on being a lost kid like Jesus in this story.
- Stephen and I shared a story of our son Ashton at the age of 3-4 who found it hilarious to hide from us in a clothing rounder of coats in Scheels!

- When Ashton eventually decided to reveal himself to us, it was right before we were about to have him announced on the intercom speaker.
- I remember to this day the joy and laughter coming from this kid and the look of sheer pleasure upon his face until he saw the stern looks on our faces.
- **Stephen and I did not find his little hide and seek antic funny at all.**
- It was quite the day to say the least!
- **Our Wednesday conversations got a little more personal and vulnerable, when I posed other questions that I feel worth repeating in our time together.**
- I asked the question, “Have you ever searched for something that you were never able to find?”
- How did you feel in those searching moments?
- For example, over a week ago, Stephen and I misplaced our Roku TV remote for the TV in our kitchen.

- Initially our quest for this remote was calm and somewhat non-emergent.
- For Steve was cooking dinner and it wasn't quite ready yet.
- Initially I was the first one who actually began the search for the remote, thinking and believing that it would show up just in time for our meal to be ready, so that we can tune into Hulu and continue our binge watching of "Living Single," while enjoying our meal together.
- When I saw that the food was basically complete, I felt my anxiety begin to rise and asked Steve to join me in the search for this remote—we never found the Roku remote.
- Luckily we had a spare remote upstairs in our bedroom—But still.....I'm still disturbed and perturbed as to where that remote went!

- **Our conversation got a little more in depth and personal on Wednesday night when I asked the question, have you ever found yourself searching for something in your personal life; spiritually, emotionally, relationally only to discover you are not quite sure what has gone amiss?**
- Have you ever felt like something was just off in your life?
- When people ask you “are you ok?” Your true answer if you ever felt so brave to name it out loud is, “no I am not ok?”
- As many of you all know, I have been out of the pulpit and the Church for roughly 4 weeks.
- I am grateful to be back— but if I can be honest, I needed to get some time to just get away...
- For my truth in the question, “Are you ok,” if someone were to have asked me four weeks

ago...my answer would have been admittedly...

no...I am not ok.

- So I took four weeks of attending some work with our conference, some time away with my husband in Breckenridge and then some time for spiritual respite, renewal and training...so that I can get to a place of being ok.
- And mainly how I am finding my own firm footing again lies behind the lesson of our text today and the asking of this question “why were you searching for me?”
- Because you see Church family, it takes some level of vulnerability within us all to admit when we are searching for something?
- It takes some measure of transparency and strength to admit when we are not doing ok.
- For **I have not been ok** with the state of the Church as a whole.
- **I have not been ok** with the state of our world.

- Looking at the news with Israel and Palestine...**I am not ok...**
- Looking at some of the hardships occurring within my family that is not restricted to just our biology...**I haven't been ok...**
- Just looking at myself as a woman...as Kirstie...I realized I haven't been ok....
- Furthermore it was in this revelation where I now realized I have been intuitively searching for my ok again, and my search has led me to two key places that is beginning to reveal that joy in the morning again;
- The first place my search has led me is to William Selby who is the founder and leader of *The Center for Pastoral Effectiveness* who teaches pastors, priests and all clergy all about family systems and how to manage our anxiety.
- This is a covenant group that will meet an additional 5 more times during this track.

- It is a sacred group in which I will not share any particulars of who is in there and what our challenges are.
- However, there was one thing that was shared about the human brain that will forever change my life—that I truly believe will bless someone here today.
- For it in this information, anyone who has a psychology/sociology/medical or science background, or anyone who has a curious mind enough to google it can learn how our brain is designed to process information.
- And what I learned is that at least 85 percent of our brain is the thinking cortex in which we should all strive to be in.
- For it is in the thinking cortex of our brain where our speech resides ;
- It is in the thinking cortex of our brain where our creativity and innovation ;

- It is in the thinking cortex of our brain where our problem solving and healthy critical thinking skills lies.
- The other portion of our brain is divided into the limbic system in which our emotions exists, followed by a small portion of our brain called the reptilian brain— in which our instincts and survival resides.
- Furthermore, where most of us are driven to operate from when we feel scared or uncertain or fearful is right in our reptilian brain.
- Church family my biggest aha moment is that although the reptilian portion of our brain is there and it is useful for that fight, flight instinct;
- My biggest revelation is that when you and I stay stuck in this reptilian portion of our brain on a consistent basis— this is how our insecurities begin to overwhelm us, our fears overwhelm us, change overwhelm us, other people overwhelm

us—simply because many of us are operating in survival mode on a constant basis which only leads to a person becoming lost, frantic, confused, constantly triggered, constantly frustrated and more.

- Furthermore it was in this discovery that I have been led back to the second pathway towards being ok....Jesus—in which my strength has been renewed,
- My focus has been renewed,
- My vision has been renewed,
- My confidence in who and whose I am has been renewed, because of being invited back into the thinking cortex of my brain—
- In a similar way that this 12 year old Jesus, invited his own mother back into the thinking cortex of her brain—
- To recall her own story of how the angel told her in Luke 1: 30

“Don’t be afraid, Mary. You have found favor [a]
with God.

31

*You will become pregnant, give birth to a son,
and name him Jesus.*

32

*He will be a great man
and will be called the Son of the Most High.
The Lord God will give him
the throne of his ancestor David.*

33

*Your son will be king of Jacob’s people forever,
and his kingdom will never end....*

**- So Why Momma were you searching for me—
Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s
house?**

- The question I leave with us to continue to explore
is Why Church are we searching for Jesus?

- For as I cite the declaration of Jesus from the author Otis Moss III written in his book “Blue Note Preaching In a Post-Soul World;
- Jesus knows all about my troubles.
- Jesus walks and talks with me.
- Jesus picks me up and turns me around and plants my feet on solid ground.
- Jesus is a mind regulator,
- A heart fixer,
- A friend at midnight,
- Balm in Gilead,
- Trouble over deep water,
- And bread in a starving land.
- Jesus understands my predicament.
- Why does he understand my predicament?
- Jesus lived a life as a colonized person and a minority in a community that was under siege by an occupying army.’ Jesus knows about racial profiling,

- Jesus understands mass incarceration,
- Jesus is frustrated with the traditional church,
- Jesus experiences state sponsored torture, knows what it's like to have a public defender who lacks competency, was executed for a crime he did not commit and understands character assassination in the media before and after one's death.
- Jesus even knows what it is like to be stopped and frisked.
- Jesus is acquainted with patriarchy, since not a single brother would listen to any of the sisters when they announced, "Guess what y'all, the tomb is empty!"
- Jesus knows all about all our troubles—
- Jesus wrestles with tragedy but does not fall into despair.
- This is a long way of my naming Church family that sometimes we have to be able to step away,

to realize that what we have been searching for has always been staring at us all the time!

- Sometimes we have to be able to name that we are not ok, so that we can discover who can make it ok— which thereby leads us into a new level of discovery, that will unearth things within us and around us— that allows us to see all of the possibilities of this tomb we have talked about in our faith being empty.
- For Christ is not there ... He is Risen indeed... He is Risen within thee.
- Let the Church say Amen!