

Luke 2:41-52  
**“2022 Reset: God’s Business”**  
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Roslindale Congregational Church, UCC, Roslindale, MA  
Second Sunday after Christmas, January, 2, 2022

*The Reading:*

*<sup>41</sup> Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. <sup>43</sup> When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. <sup>44</sup> Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup> When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup> When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” <sup>49</sup> He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” <sup>50</sup> But they did not understand what he said to them.*

*<sup>51</sup> Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.*

Now that the holidays are behind us and the New Year is upon us, our minds reset to ‘taking care of business:’ the things we have to attend to and need to get done.

After the Passover holiday, Mary and Joseph were probably thinking this way too. They had spent seven glorious days in Jerusalem celebrating their religious traditions among family and friends, feasting and catching up, without attention to time or deadlines. The kids had been taken care of by this ‘village.’ But then they realized: “We gotta get back to Nazareth and deal with business, appointments, and carpentry orders.” And a day into their home journey, probably fifteen miles out: “OMG! Where’s Jesus? He’s not with you? You? You? Last I saw him... Oh no! He’s *Home Alone* in Jerusalem.”

They looked everywhere they had been, everywhere they thought a little boy would go. Three days, they searched; everywhere, but where he was. They were getting more and more anxious. It may have been then that Mary recalled those things she had pondered at Jesus’ birth and at his presentation to the Lord, and they checked out the Temple. The last place you look!

It must have stung to hear their son say: “Why are you so upset? Didn’t you know that I’d be here?!”

In the Greek manuscript, verse 49 doesn’t have an object in the sentence; a word is missing: “Didn’t you know that I must be in or about the \_\_\_\_ of the Father?” So

translators have weighed other linguistic and contextual clues to fill in the blank.<sup>1</sup> Some have selected the geographical word: “in the house of the Father,” while others have determined: “in the affairs, interests, or business of the Father.” The point in favor of the second is that Jesus’ priority was not just being physically present in the Temple, or doing its *busy* work, but being about God’s *business*. **In other words, the pre-teen Jesus was focused on what God was focused on.**

If we look at this moment from the human side of his nature, at almost thirteen years-old and bar mitzvahed, Jesus is like a youth going through Christian confirmation. He wanted to learn and “explore to the uttermost what it means to call God ‘Father.’”<sup>2</sup> Like our RCC children, Jesus wanted to ask questions and share his ideas, that is, to become an engaged *adult* of faith.

If we look at this situation from the divine side of his nature, Jesus was also becoming more aware of his *particular* identity as the Son of God – his own spiritual call and vocation.

When our son was about two, we were trying to wean him off the pacifier. He called it his “TaTa.” For a few days, we actually couldn’t find it and told him that it was gone. Then, one day, as I was sitting on his bed, helping him get dressed, I noticed that his pacifier was squeezed between two bookshelves. I looked away quickly, so Nathan wouldn’t notice, but it was too late; pointing, he said, “TaTa!” His eyes had followed mine!

**Friends, if you and I want to find Jesus today and in 2022, we need to follow his eyes, his choices and his behavior. We must focus on what *he* was focused upon: God’s business.**

There’s a superb exchange between Ebenezer Scrooge and his deceased business partner, Jacob Marley, in Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. Marley’s ghost has appeared to warn Scrooge against his self-centered, greedy conduct. Marley laments: “Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode?!...” Scrooge replies: “But you were always a good man of business, Jacob...” “Business!” “[Humanity] was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”<sup>3</sup>

**So I agree this morning that focus on “God’s business” is the reset you and I need for 2022.**

Reset to Bible study and exciting, respectful dialogue with others. Reset to prayer and social activism combined by practicing these with others in the church. Reset to change your own habits and reach out in empathy to heal others. Reset to courageously discover your identity and live out your particular call! These are just a few of the ‘places’ where *God* is taking care of business. This is where you’ll find Jesus *and* yourself!

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<sup>1</sup>R. Alan Culpepper, “The Gospel of Luke,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. IX* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 77.

<sup>2</sup>G.B. Caird, *St. Luke* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 66.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, Stave One.

Theologian, educator, and poet Howard Thurman encourages us in this direction:

“When the song of the angels is stilled,

When the star in the sky is gone,

When the Kings and princes are home,

When the shepherds are back with their flock,

The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,

to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among others,

to make music in the heart.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Howard Thurman, “The Work of Christmas,” *The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations* (United Press).