

9 January 2013
Epiphany Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

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“They Went to Find Jesus; He Came to Find Us”
Text: Luke 2:41-52 (Romans 12:1-5; 1 Kings 8:6-13)

In the beginning, when God created Adam and put him in His Garden to take care of it, Adam’s mind - unaffected by sin - was clear and sharp. Equipped with such a noble, beautiful, and wonderful mind, he was able to name every beast and created thing according to its innate, true nature and character. He knew from what Eve had been created without ever having seen her before. He knew what a great throng of children would be born to her. But most of all, he knew his Father and he knew who he was. God had dressed him with great splendor, and everything in him was pure, clean, and innocent.

That would, of course, all soon change. Drastically. For the worse.

But is that perfection not what we heard tonight? For St. Luke told us tonight about the *second* Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, as a twelve-year-old child. It’s the only childhood account we have of Jesus. Other extra-biblical writings from centuries after Jesus purport to have stories of an out-of-control child deity, haphazardly trying to learn how to harness His power, creating birds out of mud and cursing to death friends who bump into Him - but that’s no second Adam. No Jesus, born without sin, is like Adam before the Fall: pure, clean, and innocent. Equipped with a noble, beautiful, and wonderful mind. A mind able to perceive and know unhindered by the destructive forces of the sin in our bodies.

And so it was in the Temple that day. Jesus didn’t amaze the teachers with His questions and answers because He was pulling some secret God-knowledge out of the back pocket of His divine nature. No, what we see here in Jesus is man as man was meant to be, with a mind unaffected by the decay and limitation of sin - something no one except Adam and Eve had ever seen before.

And also, like Adam, Jesus knew who He was. And where He needed to be. And so He calmly tells His frantic and anxious parents: *I wasn’t lost! **Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?*** Joseph and Mary did not understand what He was telling them. Really, how could they? Mary simply added this to the long list of things she kept and treasured in her heart.

But it is what comes next in this story that *separates* Jesus from Adam: ***And [Jesus] went down with [his parents] and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.***

The first Adam could not keep God's Word. The first Adam would not submit Himself to God's command not to eat from that *one tree*. From just that *one tree* amid the hundreds, if not thousands, of others. And so perhaps, we could say, with that eating the first Adam lost his mind, along with his life.

But what the first Adam could not and would not do, the second Adam, **Jesus, did**. Perfectly keeping God's Word from first to last, to be the spotless Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. To undo the havoc wreaked by the first Adam's sin. To fulfill and bring to a conclusion all the sacrifices being made in that very Temple. A task He would fulfill some twenty years later when He would *set His face to go to Jerusalem* (Luke 9:51) to go to the cross. And nothing would stop Him.

And this time when He went to Jerusalem, **after three days** there would once *again* be Marys coming to look for Him - to look for His body in the tomb where they laid Him. But *they would not* find Him - *now the resurrected Jesus finds them!* And He finds His disciples hiding in the upper room. And He finds the two disciples walking the road to Emmaus. For this is why He came - why He was born and grew and was submissive to His parents and did the will of His Father in heaven: He came to find the lost. To find all of us, all of us lost in sin and death, from Adam to today, and bring us home again. Home to *our* Father. Home in the forgiveness of our sins. Home in a resurrection to a new life. That we may live in our Father's house, forever.

And until that day, that you may begin to live as you were created to live, **presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice**, Paul says. A *living* sacrifice because Jesus presented His body to death in our place. That's done. Death is conquered. So our sacrifice is a living one. Living **not conformed to this world** - that's the Old Adam, sinful Adam, dead Adam; but **transformed by the renewal of your mind** - that's the New Adam, holy Adam, living Adam. That's you who have been washed clean by the blood of Christ. That's you who who know who you are - children of God - and given the Word of God to think rightly again. That's you who now live no longer for sin, but for what is good and right and holy.

Now, it's true: we do not always live that way but give in to the impulses of the Old Adam in us, and our old sinful desires. So we pray for forgiveness from the Lamb who has died for our forgiveness and promised us forgiveness. And we hear His absolution and we receive that forgiveness in His Supper. And thus we are raised and strengthened to now live not only with a renewed mind, but also with a new Spirit - the *Holy* Spirit. For now, unlike in the days of Solomon, God does not dwell in a house of stone, as beautiful and exalted as they may be. He came to dwell among us in the flesh and bone of Jesus, who was exalted to the highest place, at the right hand of God the Father. And now He comes to dwell in you and me by His Spirit, so that we are now His new temples of flesh and bone. That we may be

who we once were; who we were created to be. That we may live in holiness and unity now. That we may be children of God.

For so it is for those whom Jesus finds, that we be lost no more. That as He makes His home with us and gives us His Spirit, we too may make our home in our Father's house, hearing our Lord's Word, praying our Lord's Prayer, and eating our Lord's Supper. Until that day when we are summoned home, and we go *up* to be with Him in His kingdom, forever.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.