

Celebrate Children: April 30, 2006

“Treasure”

Luke 2:41-52

Pr. Tom Schoenherr

Children can certainly be a mystery to their parents at times. We, as parents and grandparents are proud of our children and grandchildren, but there may be times when we throw up our hands and admit that we just do not understand them. Our children may readily admit that that is true. Mary and Joseph had the same problem with Jesus. They did not understand him. But God treasured Jesus, and Mary and Joseph treasured him too. We treasure our children, and also are treasured by them.

When I was about 10 years old, I remember that our family was getting ready to go to a family picnic at my father's cousin's house. It was the 4th of July, and after eating we would all walk a couple of blocks to the park to watch the fireworks. My sisters were taking a long time getting ready, so I went down to the creek, where I loved to walk and try to catch crawfish, or just explore, or sail a leaf on the rushing water. I found a leaf and let it go on the water. Sometimes I had to run along the bank to keep up with it. One time I had to stop because the leaf got stuck. I had to spend time opening up the channel so that the water would flow freely. My leaf, which I pretended was a ship carrying treasure chests of gold, was sailing along quickly now.

I must have been a ½ mile from home, but I didn't know because I was having such a great time being captain of a treasure ship. Once I heard my name being called from far away, but I was in the process of making a dam for the ship to go over, and I just kept on working. The ship went over the dam and was sailing along through the rapids when all of a sudden I looked up and my mother was standing above me on top of the creek bank, calling my name.

“Where have you been?” She was really upset with me, saying that she and my father had been looking for me for half an hour. They did not know where I was, and they were worried and scared. She couldn't understand why I did this. I couldn't understand her concern. I was just having a great time. There was no question however, that I would be obedient for the rest of the evening as we walked to the car.

Jesus' parents were anxious and worried about him. They treasured Jesus, just as my parents treasured me. I can't imagine what they went through to find him. Mary and Joseph faithfully went to the Passover, traveling to the Temple with their family and friends. They walked together because it was a long journey, they loved each other, and it was safer to travel in groups than to walk alone.

Mary and Joseph were confident that Jesus was with his cousins and friends on the journey home. They were good parents. When they discovered he was missing, they had to risk their lives walking alone back to Jerusalem. They may have taken other family members with them. They had been gone one day so they had to travel a day back to Jerusalem and then it took them 3 days to find Jesus. Jesus was lost for 5 days. They must

have been frantic. Where did Jesus stay during this time? Who fed and took care of him for those 5 days? The people who cared for him must have been loving people.

When Mary and Joseph find Jesus, Mary says, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Do you know what kind of agony you have put us through? Jesus says, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I must be in my Father's house?"

Mary and Joseph did not understand Jesus, and frankly, I would not have either. He really put them through a fearful time, like I did with my parents. But Jesus returned to Nazareth with them, and was obedient to Joseph and Mary.

Jesus was doing a good thing by listening to God's voice and discovering more about who he was as God's Son., but he had also neglected his father and mother and family who also treasured him.

Jesus made it a habit to treasure his Father and the Word, to be in church worshipping, spending time in prayer, caring for the sick and those who were hungry. How much of a habit are things for us? Do we neglect worship and prayer? Have we stopped searching more deeply for Jesus in the Word of God? Do we feel lost or disconnected from God?

Just as Mary and Joseph searched for days for Jesus, God searches for and finds the lost. God finds you and me because He treasures us so much. We are that one sheep who is lost whom the Shepherd finds. God treasures us by giving us His Word and through Holy Communion, He gives us Himself. Jesus goes to the cross because He must be about His Father's business of seeking and saving the lost. He is there in the midst of our questions and our lack of understanding. We are freed to treasure God and His love for us.

We are freed to treasure the children of our family and our congregation, to give thanks for and nurture their curiosity and unique gifts. Even when we don't understand them, to point them in the way of following Jesus.

We are freed to treasure teachers and those who care for our children when we are apart from them. We are freed as children to treasure our parents, and to give thanks for the times when they agonize over us, hug us in public, and get scared when we seem lost. It is a blessing when parents and children pray for one another.

We are freed to treasure our homes and our church as places where Jesus comes to live with us. There we can listen to God's Word, ask questions, spend time in prayer and conversation with God, looking for Jesus, searching for His presence in study of God's Word and in our daily lives.

Now we are free to treasure the opportunity to grow in favor with God and with one another, to treasure God so much that we want to be about our Father's business in learning, in reaching out to the lost, in being merciful to all.

With Mary, we look at all that Jesus is saying and doing, and all that He has done for us; and we look at and grow with our children, and see all that they say and do, and we give thanks that Jesus treasures them, and sometimes we just need to step back and treasure all these things and ponder them in our hearts. Amen.