

TEXT: Luke 2:41-52

TOPIC: As Jesus' parents head home with a caravan, Jesus remains in Jerusalem; so, they retrieve him.

SUBJECT: Being at home in ourselves isn't entirely up to us, but up to how we connect with God.

TITLE: Home in Plain Sight

When I was little, my parents and siblings would take me to the church nursery while they would attend worship. I remember playing with Play Doh, coloring pictures, large wood cars the nursery had, as well as acting like Godzilla every time the girls would build a "house" out of cardboard bricks.

One of those Sundays was a little different than others, however.

Because there were eight of us living at home at the time, my parents and siblings would take two cars to get everyone to church. On one given Sunday, church got over and everyone went home. As Mom and my sister, Sally, were getting everything ready for lunch, the phone rang.

Lavonna Lemons was on the other end of the line. Mom answered the call and Lavonna said, "Good afternoon, Marge." Mom replied, "Well, hello, Lavonna. How are you?" Lavonna said, "I'm good but I wanted to see if you forgot anything when you left church today."

That's when my mom had one of those "oh nuts" moments. My family had forgotten to take me home.

I've always wondered if that wasn't Jesus' parent's response when they got miles outside of Jerusalem and realized Jesus wasn't with their caravan.

Just as I was perfectly content in the church nursery playing, Jesus was perfectly content in the Jerusalem temple.

My experience, however, fades in comparison to Jesus'. First, I was a toddler, and Jesus was 12. Second, learning to find home in plain sight wasn't even on my radar then; apparently, it was for Jesus.

Home in plain sight, I think, is something everyone has to do in time. I think it's harder for some to do than others, sometimes due to complacency or conformity or under-developed critical thinking skills. But when people discover that discovering themselves and how God intends for them to be is what it means to be home in plain sight, that changes the game.

Even though Jesus wasn't on the road back to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary doesn't mean he was lost. Jesus was home in plain sight, only Mary and Joseph didn't understand that. Jesus was doing what any of us could do when we choose to: look for home in plain sight.

Finding home in plain sight means discovering who we are, warts and all. Being home in plain sight means being aware of how God is working through everything that isn't you to refine you into who God always meant you to be. Finding home in plain sight means getting comfortable with the home God has placed in each of our lives, and connecting with God for what God wants us to do with it.

I can't say that my quest for looking for home in plain sight began when I was accidentally left in the church nursery, but that memory certainly speaks to those times when I have needed to see myself with greater clarity. In my experience, when I haven't felt at home in plain sight, and God has niggled me, it has happened when God wanted me to open the shades and throw open the sash to let some fresh air into my home and let light into my life.

I can't help but think if that isn't the job God is asking us to do. When people look for home in plain sight, they start to see themselves more clearly and they become more

interested in letting God work through their lives because God has been niggling them. I can't help but wonder if part of our job isn't both to participate in making the stories that touch others lives, and to actively embrace and share the stories that have formed our lives. The stories that are born from the way we serve others and the stories that are shared from those times we've been blessed by someone else are often stories of love where love was shown, love was expressed or love was learned.

Sometimes, however, feeling God's niggle or seeing home in plain sight takes a little effort. In my experience, it's often been because the changes I've felt God ask me to make have often created anxiety. I can imagine anxiety is what Mary and Joseph felt when they realized Jesus wasn't with their caravan. And when Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple, my guess is their anxiety is the reason they scolded him.

The problem with anxiety is that it affects the way people think. When I've felt anxiety, it's often been because I was afraid of something or I let myself be bothered by something. In either instance, when I've felt anxious it's been because I wasn't thinking from the right part of my brain. I'm not sure Mary and Joseph's anxiety calmed until they found Jesus and Jesus asked them, "Why are you searching for me? Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?"

The greatest moments of anxiety people have is when they aren't in their Father's house.

The greatest moments of anxiety are when people do not see home in plain sight.

The greatest moments of anxiety are when people think entitlement and privilege make them exceptions rather than exceptional.

People are the most exceptional when they are thinking from their cortex and they let their lives be managed by God's will rather than their own.

People are the most exceptional when they are home in plain sight and see themselves so clearly that they serve others, just like Jesus did.

People are the most exceptional when their service to others and to community makes the stories they'll be remembered by, and their stories of serving inspire others to serve.

When God is niggling us, our task is every bit like Mary and Joseph's because when God is niggling us, God is in the process of forming or transforming us, and inviting us to make our home in plain sight with ourselves, God and others. When God is niggling us, may we learn to see home in plain sight with deep respect and discernment for the future and the stories God has in store for our lives.

Provided we do that, others may come to us and ask us, "Why have you treated us like this? We've been worried sick about you." And if that happens, we can honestly reply "this entire time we've been home in plain sight to ourselves and to God; won't you join me."

In the name of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – one God in perfect community. Amen.