

Pastor Jim Lloyd

Date: December 23, 2018

Title: Finding Christ This Christmas

Text: Luke 2:41-50

The title of our sermon this morning is "Finding Christ this Christmas." It's been my observation again this year that for some people – rather than Christmas drawing them closer to Christ, there's a sense in which people are drawn AWAY from the Lord Jesus in the MIDST of the Christmas celebration. Their eyes are turned to parties and shopping and baking and decorating or making lists of what they want or will buy for Christmas. Sometimes there's a let-down in church attendance. After all there is so very much vying for our attention and time. For many the sacredness of Sunday has disappeared. There is a softening of the prayer life. No time for such. There is likely a lessening of witnessing. Our culture continues to make it easier to lose the Lord Jesus in the very midst of the celebration that is SUPPOSED to be ABOUT the Lord Jesus.

Now, I don't believe there is any record of the early church celebrating Christmas like we do. Of course, the angels celebrated His birth. The shepherds worshipped Him. And the wise men came and paid homage to the Christ child. But the early church did not celebrate His birthday as such. Certainly not in the commercial way we Americans tend to. Perhaps the closest thing then to what we call Christmas is Passover. By that I don't mean that Passover and Christmas are alike, but I mean in the early church they had a celebration. It was a religious celebration. It was a time of gift-giving. It was a time of feasting. It was a time of trips. It was a time when people got together. It was a time of joy. It was a time of worship. It was a BIG thing. In Bible times, Passover was to those people, in like fashion, what Christmas is to us, so far as celebration.

A very interesting thing happens here in the book of Luke, right after the Christmas story, right after the events that took place around His birth. The Bible tells of Jesus, who, being twelve years of age, went with His parents to Passover. After the Passover, while Jesus' parents were on their way back home, AFTER HAVING GONE A DAY'S JOURNEY, realized that Jesus was NOT with them! THEY had LOST JESUS in the MIDST of the celebration. I wonder if the same thing might happen to you. So I'm going to ask AND answer five questions this morning, and I want you to get these, not only in your head, but down in your heart. 1. IN WHAT SENSE can we lose Jesus? 2. WHO can lose Jesus? 3. WHERE can we lose Christ? 4. HOW can we lose Him? 5. If we have LOST Him, how can we FIND Him again? Now, let's read the story here. (Read Text)

1. IN WHAT SENSE CAN WE LOSE JESUS? What two groups of people NEED to find Jesus? Those who have NEVER found Him and those who have LOST Him. Mary and Joseph were related to Jesus. Joseph was His foster father and Mary was His mother. Now how did THEY lose Jesus? They did not lose Jesus in the sense of relationship? NO. Mary was STILL His mother and Joseph was STILL His earthly father. It was NOT in the sense of relationship that they lost Jesus, rather it was in the sense of FELLOWSHIP that they lost the Lord Jesus. In Psalm 37:23&24, the Word says, *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not utterly be cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."* That verse says you can fall but not be cast down. I remember helping Jessica learn to walk. In her earliest days of walking, she'd fall and get back up. Now when we were in the living room on the carpet, I'd let her take my finger and we'd walk. But if we were going to cross the street, I didn't let her take hold of my finger like she usually would. I would take her hand in my hand. She WASN'T holding me. I was holding her. Now when I was holding her, her knees may buckle, but could only go so far. The Word says, *"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."* Has He ever done that for you? He's done that for me MANY times. My knees have buckled, but thank God I was not holding on to Him, HE WAS HOLDING ON TO ME! So, here we see a loss of fellowship, not a loss of relationship. In this passage of Scripture, Mary and Joseph said, *"We sought you sorrowfully."* Their hearts were filled with sorrow. Note that Jesus had not REALLY wandered off from them. THEY had wandered a day's journey from Jesus. And because of that distance between, there was sorrow. May I tell you that if you are out of fellowship with the Lord, it will affect your level of joy. You might have happiness. You can still have fun, but you don't have the joy referenced in Galatians chapter 5. I believe that the most miserable person in the world is not an unsaved person. The most miserable person in the world is a saved person out of fellowship with Jesus or the person who was ONCE in fellowship with Jesus and is NO LONGER in fellowship with Him. Mary and Joseph said, *"Look, we have sought thee sorrowfully."* Do you want to know whether or not Christ is lost in your heart and in your life – not in the sense of relationship, but in the sense of fellowship? Take the JOY test. Is there joy in your heart RIGHT NOW? Joy unspeakable and full of glory? "Well, Pastor," you might say, "nobody's joyful ALL the time." The Scripture does say, *"Rejoice in the*

LORD ALWAYS, and again I say, rejoice." The only way you can rejoice ALWAYS is to rejoice in the LORD. HE NEVER CHANGES! And so, in what sense can we lose the Lord Jesus? In the sense of fellowship. Mary was still His mother, Joseph was still His earthly father, but there was not that connectivity. Jesus was no longer in their midst.

2. WHO MAY LOSE JESUS? Well, it may surprise us to see that it was MARY & JOSEPH that lost Him. The Bible says in verse 43, *"And when the child had fulfilled the days as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem AND Joseph and His mother knew not of it."* Who might we LEAST expect to lose Jesus? Anyone here ever lose your kid? It's rather embarrassing, isn't it? Why? It's a parent's responsibility to know where their kids are. What will people think of me? I've lost my child. I should have been more attentive. So, who would we least expect to lose Jesus? His parents. Did you know that those that we LEAST expect to lose the Lord Jesus MAY lose Him? Now you may be a deacon in this church or it could be the man behind the pulpit who's in danger of losing the Lord Jesus Christ. If you'll study the Bible, you'll find out that God's choicest of saints were out of fellowship with Him from time to time. Noah, David, Moses, Samson, Peter – all of these and others in the Bible, got out of fellowship with the Lord. The Bible says, *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* Oswald Chambers said this, "an unguarded strength is a double weakness." Do you think you're beyond getting away from Jesus? Mary did. Joseph did. Many of the great saints of the Bible have at one time or another gotten away from the Lord. Sometimes people think, "You know, if I were just a pastor like Pastor Lloyd or Pastor Norm, if I just lived in a holy atmosphere, I'd never have any temptation." Someone told me a long time ago that the devil aims his biggest guns at God's servants. I just want to make very clear to you, that it doesn't matter who you are, that you never come to a place where you're not in danger of slipping away from the Lord. That is – EVERYONE must take heed, lest he fall! So in answer to our 2nd question, ANYONE, without care and precaution, can lose Jesus.

3. WHERE CAN WE LOSE CHRIST? WHERE did Mary and Joseph lose Jesus? Look if you will in verse 41, *"Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover."* They lost Him in the midst of a religious ceremony. They lost Him in a spiritual celebration. They didn't lose Him in a dance hall. They didn't lose Him in a nightclub. They did not lose Him at the local bar. It was in the midst of a religious ceremony that they lost Him. You see, Passover is an Old Testament foretelling of the Lord Jesus. The Passover was in celebration of the blood of the Lamb that was sprinkled on the doorposts – thus causing the Lord to pass over. It was a picture of the work of Jesus. And it was there that they lost the Lord Jesus. What could be worse this Christmas than you finding yourself separated from Jesus? Do you know what I found out when I was going to Bible College? I found out that Bible College students could backslide with a Bible under their arm. In the midst of studying about the Lord Jesus, somehow they lost that fellowship with Him. As a matter of fact, in the Book of Revelation, there was a CHURCH known as the church at Laodicea. Our Lord said to that church, *"Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."* Then He ends His comments to the church at Laodicea with the familiar Rev. 3:20 passage that says, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him."* We preachers like to use that as an evangelical text, but I'm not sure that's the most accurate use of the text. Where's Jesus knocking? In this text anyway, He's not knocking at the sinner's heart. He is knocking at the door of the church. We say, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," but... sometimes we've gotten so busy that we have neglected to notice that Jesus is no longer in our midst. Jesus has moved to the outside and we hear Him knocking to get back in. Will Christmas take you away from Jesus? It could. It was the Passover celebration that separated Mary and Joseph from Jesus. What a LESSON that ought to be to us! What a WARNING! They lost Him in the midst of a religious celebration. So in that same fashion, we can have service – we can have a celebration – and leave out the CHRIST of CHRISTmas! Illustration: There is an old story about a prince who loved his princess very much. He was famously wealthy. His princess died and he was heartbroken. He decided that he would build for this princess the most glorious shrine and burial place that had ever been built. He got the architects of the kingdom together and they drew the plans for this beautiful shrine. It was to be magnificent because of the great love that he had for her. Many plans were drawn until finally he thought he had found perfection. Money was no object. Every day he would come to watch this monument being built in honor of his princess. The spires went up. The marble was put in place. The gold overlay flashed in the sun. It was all coming together. Each day it became more beautiful. He became obsessed with watching it. Everything had to be perfect. One day when it was nearly complete, he was at one of the highest points of the shrine, while looking down, he declared that everything was perfect. Everything – except for ONE thing. There was something that just didn't fit in. It seemed out of place. It just messed up the whole thing. He called the workmen and he said, "Look, you see that thing down there. It just doesn't fit. TAKE THAT OUT and it will be perfect." The workmen went down and they REMOVED the TOMB OF THE PRINCESS! Do you see the parallel? The elaborate shrine was SUPPOSED to be all about the princess. But all of a sudden, it was NOT about the princess any more. There wasn't even a PLACE FOR HER

anymore! WOW – we have this elaborate thing called CHRISTMAS. It's supposed to be ALL about Christ. Christmas begins with CHRIST. But we act as though He's messing it up a bit. It's as though Jesus is cramping our style at Christmas. Sometimes it seems as though we have room for everything EXCEPT for Christ! It almost seems that we've bought gifts for everyone EXCEPT Jesus! Could the very celebration of Christmas take us from the Christ of Christmas? The answer is YES!

4. HOW CAN WE LOSE CHRIST? How did THEY do it? Well, look if you will in verse 44 of chapter 2. *“But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey.”* How did they lose Him? By presumption, by supposition, they just ASSUMED He was with them and they didn't take the necessary measures to MAKE SURE He was with them. Now they didn't lose Him by getting drunk or stoned, by opposing Him or denying Him, or by intentionality. They went a day's journey. They went one step at a time and every step they took, they were getting further from Him, SUPPOSING the whole time that JESUS was with them. I wonder if that could be true of any of us. I had to ask myself this question before I preached this message. “Jim, are you just supposing that you're right with God?” Am I just supposing that Jesus is a reality in my life? Apparently, it's not so hard to do. I mean, you can preach, you can sing, you can be a deacon, you can come to church, you can teach a class, you can sing in the choir, you can put the biggest offering in the plate, you go from day to day and say, “Well, I'm fine.” Read in the Old Testament about Samson. The Bible says the Spirit of the Lord departed from Samson and he never knew it – HE NEVER KNEW IT! MARY & JOSEPH went a day's journey, a step at a time, just simply supposing that Jesus was with them. Yet each step they took, took them FURTHER from the Christ. I wonder, and here's another question we need to ask ourselves – “Are we willing today to look into our own hearts and see if the presence of Jesus is a reality or mere supposition? Neglect is often the way to get away from Jesus and that neglect is often based on supposition. It's often the cause of backsliding. I mentioned the church at Laodicea earlier. That church said to itself, “I'm rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. Do you know there is a danger this morning? We could, like the church at Laodicea, say, “I don't have need of anything.” When, in fact, we DO have need. We have need of the Lord Jesus. We all need to be transparent before the Lord. It's not what we SAY ABOUT OURSELVES before the Lord. It's what we ARE before the Lord. We could suppose one thing – and be DEAD wrong. You know, the Bible says when your eye is single, your body is full of light. Have you ever come to that place, where your eye is single? What does that mean? That means that you have no side issues, but Jesus Christ is foremost and central in your life. There is nothing that you've withheld. There's no unconfessed or unrepented sin. There is no love that is greater than your love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Know that the devil will work hard to keep you from coming to that place. Sometimes I have to shut myself in and fight Satan. When was the last time you really prayed through? When was the last time you got on your knees and stayed on your face until your body was full of light? And you know that you know that you know that it's not supposition, but that Jesus Christ is real to you? May I suggest that we all take a spiritual inventory, that we make sure that we are NOT guilty of taking a step away from Him, supposing that He's with us.

5. Here's the last and most important question. **IF YOU HAVE LOST HIM, HOW CAN YOU FIND JESUS AGAIN?** Well, look again in verses 45 and 46, *“And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him and it came to pass after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.”* Question: Where did they find Him? Right where they left Him. They found Him by going back to where they first lost Him. If Jesus Christ is not as real to you today as HE ONCE WAS; if you do not have that conscious awareness of His presence, let me encourage you to just go back to where you left Him. You say, “Pastor, I don't know where that was.” I believe if you open your heart to the Lord, He'll show you where it was. If you pray that prayer we've been given in the Psalms, *“Search me, oh God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts and see if there be some wicked way in me.”* I heard about a man in a rescue mission one time who was trying to get right with God. A worker said, “Get down on your knees and confess your sins.” He said, “Well, I don't know what they are.” The worker said, “You don't know what your sins are?” He said, “No.” The worker said, “Well, guess at it.” He guessed them right the first time! Friend, with a little thought, you'll likely know where you've gotten away from the Lord. Maybe you've just been neglecting your quiet time, no grandiose sin. Maybe you've loved the television and internet more than you've loved the Bible. Maybe you've stopped attending the worship services like you used to. Maybe bitterness has taken hold of your heart. Maybe there's some inordinate affection or maybe it's just carelessness, going on day after day without tuning your heart to know the Lord Jesus. Where will you find Jesus? Right where you left Him. You have to confess your sin.

Conclusion. Let me conclude with a story about a father and a son who were living together. The wife/mother had died and the father and son had sweet fellowship as they lived in their little cottage. It was a chilly night and the father said to his son, “Son, the fire's going out, will you go get another piece of wood and put it on the fire?” The son said, “Dad, I'm busy, you get the wood.” The father said, “Son, I'm asking you if you'll go get a piece of wood and put it on the fire. I'm

your father, I'm older than you are, that's not an unthinkable thing that I would ask you to do." The son said, "I'm busy." The father then said, "Son, listen, I'm sorry it's come to this. I'm not ASKING you now, I'm TELLING you, get another piece of wood and put it on the fire." The son said, "Well, since you're TELLING me, I'm gonna give you the answer. No, I will not do it." It got cold in the room, not only physically, but there was that clash between two wills. Then the father said to his son, "Now son, THIS is a serious matter, more serious than a piece of wood. You've defied me. You've refused to do what I've ASKED you to do and then TOLD you to do. Now, son, this is my house, you're a grown man, you're living under my roof. The least you could do is obey your father." He said, "I'm NOT gonna do it." "Well, son, it's come down to this, either you obey me or you can't stay here anymore." "Very well," the son said. "I'll not stay here anymore." He jumped up, walked out of the room into the night, slammed the door behind him and walked away from his father and from his home. A broken-hearted, troubled father remained. The days came and went. The son began to think to himself, "I have been a fool. Why was I so selfish? Why was I so stubborn? How could I treat my own father that way? How can I fail to obey him? I've been foolish. I don't deserve to be forgiven, but I want to be and I'm going to humble myself and go back to my father." He went back, very much like the prodigal son. He said, "Dad, I'm so sorry. I don't know what got into me. I suppose it was pride and selfishness. Daddy, you've been a wonderful dad to me. Thank you for taking care of me. Thank you for loving me. Forgive me, Dad, for my arrogance and for my selfishness. Dad, I'd like to come back and spend my days with you. Can I come back?" The father, with tears, reached out his arms and said, "Son, that would be the answer to my prayers. I've prayed that you would come home. Come on in. But son, before you sit down, would you put another piece of wood on the fire?" You know where you left Him. You know where you got away from God. How are you going to get back with Him? Just go right back to where you left Him. Whatever it was, go back to that spot, go back to that place, go back to that disobedience and deal with it. Until you do, you cannot have that fellowship with the Lord Jesus. The sermon is over. I trust the point has been made. How tragic it will be THIS Christmas if you – a deacon, a preacher, a soloist, a missionary, a godly man or woman – let the very celebration of His birth draw you away from Him. You may not even be conscious of it. Just going one step at a time away from Him. It may be that you'll want to say in the words of that old song, "I've wandered far away from God and NOW I'M COMING HOME!" Would you take inventory? Is Jesus Christ real to you? I'm not asking, are you saved? That's relationship. I'm talking about fellowship. Are you just assuming some things today? May I ask it another way? Was there ever a time when you loved Him better than you do now? If so, you're backslidden. Let's give Jesus His rightful place this Christmas.