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Have I stayed close to Jesus

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Luke 2:41-52

This week is a strange week.

Its like the in-between where we don't really know what to do with ourselves.

For me I always find this week quite a reflective week.

One where I am thinking about all that has been. But also all that is to come.

As we gather to close one year and begin another, we naturally take time to reflect.

We might ask questions like:

- *Where have I succeeded?*
- *Where have I struggled?*
- *What do I hope to do differently in the coming year?*

But this morning, I want us to consider the questions I have been pondering on that came out of this reading for me this week.

- *Have I stayed close to Jesus?*
- *Or have I, like Mary and Joseph, assumed He was with me, only to realise I've wandered away?*

These questions come as we jump from the birth of Jesus that we have just celebrated and now we are where he was approx. 12 years old.

The only time we hear of Jesus as a child.

This comes from when Mary and Joseph lost track of Jesus during their journey home from Jerusalem. It's a moment of anxiety, searching, and eventual rediscovery.

As we unpack this story, it provides us with a guide for examining our relationship with Jesus as we prepare for the new year.

Recognizing When We've Assumed Jesus Is With Us

The passage begins with Mary and Joseph traveling home after the Festival of the Passover.

They had completed the journey many times before, and they assumed Jesus was with them, traveling safely in the group. It wasn't until a day into their journey that they realized He was missing.

This scenario can feel uncomfortably familiar.

How often do we go about our daily lives—

- busy with work,
- family,
- responsibilities—
- busy preparing the Christmas dinner,
- wrapping presents,
- getting Christmas services ready,

assuming Jesus is with us, only to discover that somewhere along the way, we've lost touch with Him?

The danger of assumption is that it creates a false sense of security.

Mary and Joseph didn't notice Jesus was missing because they assumed He was nearby.

Likewise, we can go through the motions of faith—attending church, saying prayers, or doing good deeds— but are we fully connected?

As the new year begins, let us take time to reflect:

- *Have I grown closer to Jesus this year, or have I drifted?*

This week is a great week to reflect on that question.

Searching for Jesus With Urgency

When Mary and Joseph realized Jesus was missing, they immediately stopped their journey and began searching for Him.

There was an urgency!!

After three anxious days, they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening and asking questions.

Their search teaches us an important lesson:

- When we realize we've lost sight of Jesus, we must seek Him with urgency.
- The new year is a perfect time to stop, reflect, and recommit ourselves to pursuing Him.

Seeking Jesus requires intentionality.

It means prioritising prayer, engaging with God's Word, and drawing near to Him in worship.

It may also mean examining areas of our lives where we've allowed distractions or complacency to pull us away from Him.

Jeremiah 29:13 reminds us of God's promise: *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*

Staying Close to Jesus in the New Year

When Mary and Joseph found Jesus, He was in the temple—His Father’s house—fully engaged in the work of understanding and teaching God’s truth.

He responded to Mary’s concern with these words:

- *“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”* – **As if everything was normal!**

This response reminds us that Jesus is always about His Father’s business.

If we want to stay close to Him, we must join Him in His work.

The passage concludes with Jesus returning to Nazareth, where He grew in wisdom, stature, and favour with God and man.

This growth provides a vision for us all for the new year:

- as we stay close to Jesus,
- He shapes us,
- strengthens us,
- and helps us grow into the people God created us to be.

Steps to Stay Close to Jesus in the New Year

So how does this passage help us in the new year?

These are four things I have committed myself to do this year and I would love you to join me

1. Examine Your Heart:

- Take time to reflect on where you are in your walk with Jesus.
- Have you grown closer to Him,
- have you allowed distractions to pull you away?

2. Prioritize His Presence:

- Make Jesus the centre of your daily life by committing to prayer, Bible study, and worship.
- Maybe join the Alpha course or come along with a friend

3. Join Him in His Work:

- Look for ways to serve others
- share His love,
- live out your faith in practical ways.

4. Trust His Guidance:

- As you step into the unknown of a new year
- trust that Jesus is with you,
- leading you and shaping you for His purposes.

As we close this year and begin another, let's not assume that Jesus is automatically with us.

Instead, let us be intentional about seeking Him and staying close to Him.

We've got a great new sermon series that we can be intentional about following.

We've got two Alpha courses we could attend.

If we are wandering or assuming Jesus is with us and not seeking him in all things. Then I urge you to attend.

When we draw near to Jesus, He promises to draw near to us

May this new year be a year of rediscovery, renewal, and growth in our relationship with Christ.

And as we journey through the days ahead, may we find ourselves in His presence, walking in His love, and living out His purposes for our lives.

Amen.