

(Luke 2:41-52, NIV84)

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.

After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked.

"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

I recall reading a statistic somewhere which said that if a person neglects going to church for five consecutive weeks, they are more likely never to return to church again than they are to return. As of last count, we've been absent from church for seven weeks. So, where does that leave us?

Due to government restrictions and warnings from medical experts, we can hardly call our absence from church "neglect." Although, there are several recipients of this email who have been absent from church for far longer than seven weeks (you know who you are). What reasons might you give for your absence? Is it a work schedule, an extended illness, a change of address, some other circumstance beyond your control? Or is it complacency? Or, have you simply adopted the opinion that going to church and worshipping the Lord with a congregation of fellow believers is unnecessary or even expendable? Has church attendance for you become essentially like one of those paper masks that many are wearing these days -- it may or may not do you any good and at the end of the day it's disposable? If that is where you are, I pray that you reconsider that attitude and turn from it in repentance, because it is a perilous attitude to hold.

The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). You and I NEED to gather for worship. No one is an island. Just as we need to gather with family members and friends in our day to day lives (does anybody not miss the freedom to do that?), we need to gather with fellow believers to be built up and to build each other up. I hope these daily

devotions are supplying you with something that was previously lacking in your life, or at least supplementing what you already have.

We have a Savior who loves us with an everlasting love. His blood shed on the cross cleanses us from all our sins, even sins of complacency and indifference. May God's word daily whet your appetite for more of God's word and more connection with God's people.

Wouldn't it be great if, when this COVID-19 thing is over and we are allowed to gather for worship again, that our churches be filled and God's people who have long been absent return to start a new habit: the weekly gathering in God's house to worship our victorious Savior? Let's pray to that end. In the meantime, the Lord strengthen your desire to gather in person with your fellow believers.

Longing to gather with you in Christ,
Pastor Golm

May 4

My Father's Business

Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Luke 2:49

Jerusalem during the days of the Passover was just the place for a boy of twelve to have the time of his life! With soldiers stationed at prominent places, sights to be seen on every street, the marketplace humming with busy people, and children frolicking in holiday spirit throughout the city, Jerusalem afforded almost every attraction the heart of a boy could desire.

But for the 12-year-old boy Jesus, there was one compelling attraction which drew stronger at his heartstrings than all the others-his Father's house, the temple, where he could be about his Father's business. And so his parents found him "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions". In the language of today, the boy Jesus had come in off the streets and, of his own accord, had gone to "catechism class". And he had done this because of a sense of "divine necessity": "I must!"

How greatly we need to develop a similar sense of "necessity" in our lives. We need to cultivate that still, small voice which says: "I must". In Our morning and evening prayers, our prayers at the table, our attendance at public worship, our service and our contributions for the Kingdom, our personal, daily service to our fellowman-in all these things we need to

cultivate that impelling sense of "divine necessity". Not that we are to do these things as the unwilling slaves of a cruel habit, but because "the love of Christ leaves us no choice". We must-because we want to!

Have you and I cultivated that God-given sense of "I must"? The Savior never lost it. It was shortly before he died that he said: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."

Lord, grant that I will always be about my Father's business! Whatever the call to selfless service (to You or to my fellowman), may I resist the temptation to say "I might". Rather, may I say with an enlightened heart "I must". Amen.