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Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen. The text for the sermon is the gospel from Luke 2.

Happy New Year to you all. If you've made New Year's resolutions, I hope that you're still going strong here on day 2/3, we'll be checking back in March. I'm renewing one of my annual resolutions: be more organized. My wife would probably tell you it hasn't had much effect yet, but it does allow me to have some empathy for Mary and Joseph in our gospel reading today.

You know how it is. You go to grab something important and it's not in the place it's supposed to be. It's not in the other place it could be. It's not even in the other-other place it might be. Now you're worried. The more you look, the faster your heart starts to beat. You start checking the same places over and over as if it'll suddenly appear this time. Someone asks you, "Well, where did you leave it last?" You resist the urge to pummel them. And finally, as the hope of finding your lost item begins to fade, you get a that sinking feeling in your stomach and wish you could rewind time.

I'm guessing Mary and Joseph were feeling these emotions and more when they realized Jesus was missing. After searching the caravan, they rushed back to Jerusalem and searched the city for him. They looked everywhere. Finally, they find him sitting in the temple engaging with the teachers. I'm sure when they saw him, they experienced that rush of relief

but also anger for all the anxiety and turmoil they had to go through. Mary asks Jesus, “Why have you treated us so? Your father and I have been searching for you in great distress. Why would you put us through this, what do you have to say for yourself?” but Jesus doesn’t answer the question. “Searching for me? Why were you searching, did you not know that it’s necessary for me to be in my Father’s house?” But as Luke tells us, Mary and Joseph did not understand.

Even in this little story we see that Jesus saw the world very differently than other people. I suppose that comes with being the Son of God. We see it all through the gospels and we see it here at work when Jesus is only twelve years old.

We see this when Mary says, “Your father and I have been searching”. But Jesus counters “I was already in *my Father’s house*”.

Or, when Mary and Joseph search Jerusalem they saw the Temple as just one of the places he might be, but Jesus is amazed they needed to search at all: “*Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house*”.

Jesus, as the Son of God, as the one who knew what God was up to in the world, had a very different perspective than everyone else. While his parents saw the temple, he saw his Father’s house, while his parents prayed to God, Jesus prayed to his dad. And as we see, different perspectives lead to different actions, and Jesus’ actions were bewildering to his parents.

Perhaps once they were all safely back in Nazareth this made for an amusing “Kids say the darndest things” sort of story that Mary and Joseph would tell their neighbors, but what is amusing in children can be infuriating in adults. And that’s exactly what we see in Jesus’ ministry.

For example, Jesus goes to the synagogue and takes out a scroll and reads Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah, the one to save Israel. He sits down and announces, "I'm that guy. I'm the one God has sent". But the people don't understand. When they see Jesus, they see the son of Joseph and Mary. For them, Jesus is the kid that grew up down the street and played with the other kids in town. As the Son of God, Jesus sees things differently, but it's not cute anymore, and the people try to hurl him off a cliff.

Later on, Jesus and his disciples pluck grain on the Sabbath day and the Pharisees get mad at them for working on the Sabbath. Jesus tells the Pharisees, "Don't worry, these guys are with me and I said it's okay." Naturally, the Pharisees don't care, God's rules are God's rules, no matter what any human might say. But Jesus isn't just any human, he's the Son of God, the one who calls the shots. But no one sees it, Jesus has a different perspective.

We start to see pretty quickly in Jesus' ministry that his different perspective troubled a lot of people. In the end, he was too much to stomach. So, the Pharisees killed him, believing they were doing the work of God, believing they were getting rid of a blasphemer who dared call God his Father, and dared to speak for God.

But God raised Jesus from the dead. God vindicated Jesus. Jesus really is the Messiah, he really is the Lord of the Sabbath, and the Temple really was his Father's house. In raising Jesus from the dead God made it clear to all that Jesus didn't just see things from a different perspective but from the true, authoritative, divine perspective. This had implications for the people Jesus interacted with. And it has implications for you.

I've talked about the ways that Jesus, with this divine perspective, saw the temple, saw the Sabbath, saw God, and saw himself. But if Jesus is the Lord of Heaven and Earth, if he's the one to judge on Judgement Day, then one existential question remains: How does Jesus see you?

This question seems a little harder to answer. We read how Jesus saw things back in his day, but how does he see them in ours? How does he see us?

If we pay attention to Jesus' life and interactions in the gospel, we'll know that we can't trust our own thoughts or feelings or guesses about how Jesus sees us. Mary and Joseph didn't understand Jesus, the Pharisees certainly didn't understand Jesus, and even his own disciples didn't understand him. As people tainted by sin, we need something certain than our own thoughts or feelings. This is a matter of life and death; we need a guarantee.

This is where the God's Word and God's promises come in. Baptism is one such word. Baptism is Jesus' sign that you are included in his kingdom. It's his promise that by believing in him, when he sees you, he sees a brother or a sister. And if that's how he sees you, then that's how you really are. Despite how Satan might accuse you, despite how you might see yourself, the way that Jesus sees you trumps over everything.

This highlights one aspect of faith: it requires renouncing our human understanding and believing a promise we don't deserve, a promise that can only come from God. So, when we feel defined by our sin, or our faith is holding on by a thread, we look to Jesus' promise that we're saints. When, to our perspective, the world is spinning out of control, we look to God's promise that he's involved in every action. When death terrifies, we look to Jesus' promise that he will raise us from the dead.

Faith like this lets God's perspective define what is true. Faith like this trusts God's promises more than our own understanding. Faith like this lets God be God.

And when we understand faith in this way, we see that faith is not believing a proposition, but entering into a different perspective, a new way of seeing the entire world. This is the faith that you were called into. When you were baptized, you died, and your old ways of seeing the world died with you.

But you were raised to new life. And this includes a new way of seeing the world. My hope for you this year is that your eyesight improves. That 2021 is a year saturated by God's word, and that through it, you begin to see God, your neighbor, and yourself in the way that God has described.

Now, there will be obstacles in this new vision. I find in myself the inclination to slip into other ways of seeing the world. Subconsciously acting as if I am at the center, or I'm owed something by the world or God, or my value is dependent on my success or failure.

In view of these inclinations, one small habit I have found helpful in my own life, and a habit I'll recommend to you for 2021, is to say the Apostle's Creed every morning. Every morning, I need to locate myself in the world as God describes it. A world created by God the Father. A world that Jesus entered, was crucified and raised to new life and will return to judge the living and the dead. A world inhabited by the Holy Spirit who is leading and guiding God's church.

In this world, Jesus Christ is at the center and nothing can keep him from keeping his promises to you. Promises of forgiveness, life and salvation. And for this, be all honor and glory and praise to Christ Jesus our Lord Amen.