

Where's Jesus  
Luke 2:40-52

Where was Iowa's defense in the first quarter of yesterday's bowl game? I could see them. There were 11 guys wearing Hawkeye uniforms on the field. But an argument could be made that they weren't there, because Kentucky seemed to be able to move the ball at will. On their opening drive they got first down after first down until they got a touchdown. I doubt that I was the only one wondering where Iowa's defense was.

I am certain even more people have wondered, "Where is Jesus?" His parents did when He stayed behind in Jerusalem. But even many years later, after His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, countless people have wondered, "Where's Jesus?" when life's struggles threaten to overwhelm them. You may be one of them.

Mary and Joseph were used to Jesus being right where He was supposed to be. I have often thought how tough it must have been to be one of Jesus' siblings. It wasn't that He never had any fun, or was never a part of any mischief, but He never did anything sinful. His brothers or sisters could try to blame Him for something they did, but it wouldn't work. Mary and Joseph knew the score. They knew there was something special about Jesus.

The Christmas story is fresh in our minds. The angel Gabriel had spoken to both Joseph and Mary about the child she would bear. Shepherds they had never met before showed up the night He was born sharing their story of angels in the night sky declaring amazing things about their son.

Last week we heard Simeon point to Jesus as the promised Savior – *a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to [God's] people Israel*. The same day there at the temple the prophetess Anna spoke of Him *to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem*.

We learn from Matthew that, after the visit of the wise men, twice more an angel speaks to Joseph about Jesus. The first was a warning to get out of town and head to Egypt because King Herod wanted Jesus dead. The second time was to give the all clear – Herod was dead; it was time to take Jesus back where He was supposed to be.

That's where He always was. What it must have been like for Joseph and Mary as parents to never have to worry about their son, Jesus – He was always where He was supposed to be. Until they were a day's journey back toward Nazareth from Jerusalem and could not find Him. That's a terrible feeling – being away from home and suddenly realizing you have no idea where your child is.

I don't think we ever entered into serious panic mode, but Darla and I had a little one who would climb inside those round clothing racks at the store. We would know right where he was, and then we wouldn't. He thought it was great fun; we didn't. It was just a few anxious moments, and then we would find him.

It took Mary and Joseph three days to find Jesus. *[T]hey found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold your father*

*and I have been searching for you in great distress.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.*

Why not? ... Their emotions were probably running a little high at that moment, but you would think that they, of all people, would have a clue. The angels, shepherds, Simeon, Anna, the wise men, spending 12 years as His parent – this was no ordinary child.

But, then, Jesus’ disciples have the reputation of being a bit dull as well. Often times they did not get it. Even though Jesus spoke plainly to them, they did not understand. Even though He was right there with them, they could not see Him for who He was.

Could the same be true of us? ... Is Jesus with us? ... Not in exactly the same way He was with His parents and disciples. They saw Him as He lived His life. They saw Him die nailed to cross. They saw tomb where He was buried. On that first Easter, and numerous times afterward, they saw Him alive again!

Jesus was with them. And just before He ascended into heaven He promised them, *I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:20). Do you believe that promise? I’m guessing you do, or you wouldn’t be here this morning. Even though you haven’t seen Jesus as the disciples did, you believe in Him. You believe that He is the promised Savior who lived, died, and rose from the dead to earn for you the forgiveness of your sins and a place with Him in eternity.

Is Jesus here with us now? ... He promised, *Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them* (Matthew 18:20). We began in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in remembrance of our baptism, and as a reminder of Jesus’ promise to be with us.

It’s not always easy to see Jesus. When the struggles of this life threatened to overwhelm us and our emotions are running a little high, we may wonder where Jesus is. We may not see Him in our lives. But just because we can’t see Him at the moment does not mean He is absent. He is right where He is supposed to be. He is right where He has promised to be.

Jesus has promised to be – and is – with us in His word. When we are in the Scripture we are in Jesus, and Jesus is in us. Jesus has promised to be – and is – with us in His sacraments. In baptism the Spirit of Jesus comes to live inside of us. In His Supper we take His body and blood into our mouths and He again becomes a part of us. All of His good gifts become ours, whether we see them or not. That is His promise.

Our emotions and confidence may go this way and that, but Jesus’ promises remain solid and sure. Our faith will not disappoint us, because it does not find its source or strength in us. It is God’s gift to us. We can count on it to endure as long as God’s promises remain true, which is forever.

Iowa’s hope for a bowl win this year has gone unfulfilled. Not so your hope in Christ. Your hope in the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting are certain because Jesus is right where He’s supposed to be – with us and in us, with you and in you. Amen.