

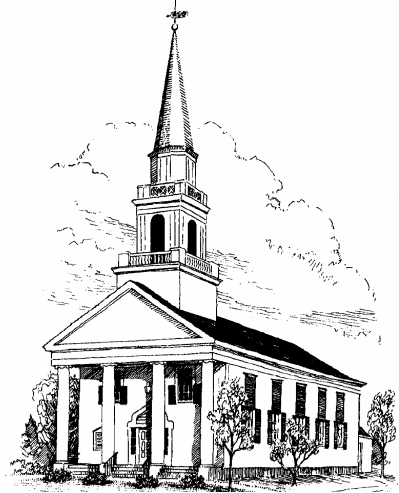
Mystic Congregational Church, UCC

Mystic, Connecticut

Sermon from December 27, 2009

Rev. Ann M. Aaberg
“Family of Origin”

Scriptures:
Psalm 148
Luke 2:41-52



How was Christmas different for you this year? Did your tradition change in some way? Maybe you went to someone else’s house this year. Or stayed home for the first time. Did you have less people, more people, different people?

Was this the year the kids slept in on Christmas morning, having grown out of getting up before dawn?

Maybe you had to visit the nursing home instead of Grandma coming to you.

Or was it your children who didn’t come for the first time this year because now they have families of their own?

Maybe there was a new baby in your midst. Or a new puppy. Perhaps for the first time it wasn’t turkey, but some other main course.

Not necessarily negative changes in tradition, just different, not the way it was last year or maybe the past few.

We read this morning: Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. Every year. And we read when he was 12 years old, they went up as usual for the festival. And, apparently, they went home as usual, too. So familiar was this annual tradition and the way they did it, traveling with extended family and friends, Mary and Joseph didn’t even look for Jesus until a whole day’s journey had passed, “assuming that he was in the group of travelers.”

But this year was different. Jesus was 12. And Passover would never be the same. He stayed behind without telling them. Something inside him had shifted and he didn’t want to go home with his family this year, running ahead with his cousins or the neighbors’ kids like they always did. He was drawn to the Temple. He wanted to stay and engage in discussion with the teachers after most everyone, all the Passover crowds had left to go home.

And Mary and Joseph were frantic, as any parents would be when your child goes miss-

ing—not found in the regular places with the usual people you could always count on his being with. We can imagine the panic rising and the decision having to be made to go back to Jerusalem, retracing every step, hunting high and low for 3 days! And they find him in—of all places—the Temple! The surprise, the relief, the anger all comes tumbling out of Mary's mouth: We have been looking for you everywhere! And he gives them a confusing answer which they don't understand, goes back home with them, becomes obedient and Mary treasured all these things in her heart.

Passover would never be the same again. And the scholars tell us to notice in Luke's Gospel how important the Temple is to Jesus, beginning with his presentation there as a baby, his amazing debut there at 12 years old, his tossing over the tables in anger during his ministry and his final days there during the last week of his life. And many speculate because of this passage this morning: What did Jesus know about himself when? Is this when he realized that within him humanity meets divinity?

Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? And by the end of his life, as evidenced by his teachings, his parables, his actions and his final discourse to his disciples in the Gospel of John, we learn that his Father's house is infinitely more expansive than a big building in Jerusalem, holding many dwelling places prepared for us.

Why were you searching for me? Don't you know you can always find me? I am in every holy place, every corner, every intersection, every room, every holy place where humanity calls out for God. You will find me in the depths of your despair, in your pain, in your misery, in the places where you think hope no longer abides, that's where you can find me. I am in every tender, beautiful, holy moment, in the kisses, the embraces, the tears, the births, the deaths, in the baptismal water, in the bread and wine...when you think you're all alone. I am there.

That year Jesus turned 12, Passover was never the same again. And because of him, we are not the same. As each Christmas goes by, and the way we celebrate his coming to us adapts to the various changes in the holy moments of our lives, may we remember that we need not frantically search for him. He never left us. He was here the whole time. Amen.