

“A Teachable Spirit”

When our daughter, Lindsay was about 3, she disappeared. I was shopping at Macys – well, Marshall Fields at that time...and one minute she was there and the next she was gone. I knew where Garth was because I was holding him. You know that instant panic and fear that pierces through you, when you have lost sight of your child in public? It didn't even last 20 seconds. She was a clothes rack over and had crawled into the middle. It felt like a fort to her. She felt safe. Oh, the relief that I felt when she poked her little face out between 2 coat hangers, as I called her name. Phew. Crisis averted!

Well, that is the back story for today's Gospel lesson. **Twelve** year-old Jesus, wasn't with the **herd when the caravan** left for home after the Feast of the Passover, and when they frantically went back to find him (after 3 days) and there he was, in the **temple courts**. He found the place in Jerusalem where men gathered (where the greatest rabbis of the land gathered) to learn from each other and he had a list of **questions on his ipad**. And he was asking, and they were answering, and he was getting it and stretching their understanding. When his parents arrived... I can imagine they just stood there, listening. They were astonished.

Jesus' wisdom astonished the people that day. Those questions he asked! There Jesus was – **listening, just to learn from others**. In Jesus' lifetime, he never stopped asking questions and listening to people. We begin a study today called, “Who Is This Man?” It is impossible to not be drawn to this man. **As disciples, our lives must be a holy example of the reality of our message**. Our lasting, enduring, life-changing message is the message of Jesus. What is it about Jesus that for 20 centuries – yes, 20 centuries, he has remained the history's central figure? And the one whose message still changes lives?

This man, Jesus ... has he ever stretched you with his questions? He asked his disciples “Who do the crowds say I am?” And then he wanted to know, “Who do you say that I am (Luke 9:20)? Or his statements to the church leaders, “You load people down with burdens they can hardly carry and you yourselves will no lift one finger to he them (Luke 11:46).” Have you been asked something on Sunday morning that stayed with you all week long? What is it about this man?

I know about Jesus from my parents and grandparents. I heard the stories from Sunday School teachers and friends. **Who told you about Jesus?** Who told you the **Jesus story in a way** that you could finally hear? Once you begin to open to Jesus, you **see him everywhere**: art, science, government, medicine, and education – his influence is limitless. He only had a **3-year run, from *who is he?* to the cross**. His ministry was short, and his impact was unpredictably life-changing.

This time in the service is not the time that Pam gives a talk, or lectures. This time is about **communicating the Word of God**, to people who have more communication options and ways to get information than at any other point in human history. And I know that **15 minutes of boring** is about **15 minutes too long**. And I know that my **hope during this time** is to tell you about **Jesus** in such a compelling way that you will want to know more, that you will want to be a more **faithful follower of Jesus**, and that you will want to show others the love that you have found in your **relationship with Jesus Christ**.

If I was sitting with today's wise rabbis right now, I would ask them, "What is it about Jesus that you can't live without?" Since I don't have that opportunity, I will ask you, "What is it about Jesus that you can't live without?"

Most of the adult leaders found Jesus irritating as heck. He would go to **dinner and deliberately picked fights**. He welcomed children and women at a time when others did not. He struggled with the **empty faith of the Pharisees and Sadducees and told them so**. His fuse could get pretty short, if he thought people were excluded or marginalized. Who was this man who was hated and killed, and yet had a **way of living and teaching** that ultimately led people to start **hospitals, the Red Cross and Salvation Army, World Vision, YMCA and Samaritan's Purse**. He helped the world see children and women as people and outcasts as worthy of an invitation. **Who is this man whose impact literally grew over time?** And still is growing today. Who is this man who leads with love every time? Who is this man who cares about the ones not invited to the breakfast or party or study? How can there still be something more to learn about Jesus?

Maybe because, as Christians, our life goal is to be like Jesus and learning what that looks like is ongoing. Hebrews tells us that the words in scripture are **living and active – they don't get done teaching** us. Study of scripture, reading the words, sharing in a small group – has a **way of helping us to invite Jesus to judge the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts**. I want my

thoughts and attitudes to be godly. **I don't want to teach or live in a way that isn't holy and true.** How about you? The world is looking for our inconsistencies. Our message and our lives – if they don't match up, the world is the first to point it out.

This past week, our community was involved in the tragic death of a police officer. What I **saw and felt next was love.** The love of Jesus, reflected through the goodness of a community, for a man whom people had never met. The love of Jesus reflected in the **actions and presence** of hundreds or thousands of strangers. The teachings of Jesus are extraordinary.

Love your enemies.

Embrace a surrendered and sacrificial life.

Do not take revenge; turn the other cheek.

Forgive without ceasing.

Do not worry.

Humble yourself.

Who is this Jesus? A man who taught a way of life that has changed the world.

Will you continue to ask yourself the question this week? What is it about Jesus that I can't live without? Amen