

In six nights the New Year begins at midnight. The celebrations will start. The resolutions will go into effect. Wait! Some of you have this look like, "Kim, I don't have any resolutions." Others are like, "What? You mean I have to start that diet at midnight just as the chocolate-dipped strawberries are being brought out to go with the champagne?" Well, if you made New Year resolutions, then logically, they begin in the New Year which begins at 12:01 a.m. Saturday morning, er...Friday night.

New Year, like Christmas, comes every year. And every year, many people make resolutions, promises to themselves, and sometimes to others, to start a diet, to be a better spouse, friend, sibling, or child, to set goals for the coming months and days. If the pop psychology surveys are true; then by the middle of the month of January, the majority (more than  $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of people making resolutions will have stopped or gotten sidetracked or slipped from their resolve to change.

Our two Scripture passages talk about commitment and resolve. The families of both Jesus and Samuel went each year on a pilgrimage to the holiest place in their respective times. For the parents of Samuel, it was to Shiloh, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept by Eli and his sons. For Mary and Joseph, the most sacred place was the temple in Jerusalem, built by Solomon, rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah, rededicated by Judas Maccabeus about 200 years before Jesus was born. Each year they would go up to the place of God and worship.

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It seems weird to jump from the celebration of the birth of Jesus last Sunday to the only recorded event in Jesus' boyhood, and then next week to Jesus' baptism by John. But only both gospels according to *Matthew* and to *Luke* say anything about Jesus' birth and life before He was an adult, and what they say is very little.

Not to be too speculative, but the question, "Why is that?" comes up. I've seen lots of commentaries discuss the reasons; and not to

digress too much, let it suffice that the gospel writers weren't all that concerned about Jesus' boyhood, but were concerned about showing Jesus as being about the Father's business.

As I have said before, I am the son of an engineer. When I was a kid, at almost every opportunity, I went out with my father to the well sites where he oversaw the oil drilling operations. By the time I was old enough to accompany him, I think I was about 7 years old then, I would grab my hard hat and a snack or lunch and eagerly go with him to see the drillers, the pipe fitters, the pumpers, and the other deckhands who worked on the wells. Regularly, I was asked, or my dad was asked in my presence, if I was going to be a petroleum engineer. When I was asked directly, I usually said that I didn't know what I was going to do when I grew up, maybe an engineer or maybe not. My dad, on the other hand, when asked, typically replied, "Probably not." You see, while I learned a great deal while scampering around the rigs and watching the men work, he and I both knew deep down that something else was in store for me.

Jesus was no more than 12 years old when His parents went up to Jerusalem on their annual pilgrimage to the temple (as best as we can tell). Around 13 years of age, most Jewish boys undergo a Bar Mitzvah, a ritual whereby they are formally recognized as an adult, can stand as witness in court, and can enter into legally binding contracts. Given the culture and society in those days, more than likely Jesus was already learning his trade from Joseph, a carpenter. But he wasn't considered yet an adult, and his vocation wasn't thought to be set, hence his mother Mary's scolding response when they finally found him after 3 days' journey back toward home.

Note Jesus' calm response to Mary's frantic question, "Child, why have you treated us like this?" Mary could have asked, "How could I have done this to you, leaving you behind like that?" But, Mary reacted like a typical mother and scolded Jesus for not keeping with the family. Jesus calmly responds, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" The Greek

doesn't say "house," rather, Jesus says that he must be "in the Father." I think the New Testament scholar, Tom Wright, is closer to the meaning of the text when he translates Jesus' question back to Mary, "Didn't you know that I would have to be getting involved with my father's work?"

That's not the response we expect from a 12-year old boy; especially to his mother. But as we read the gospels we find, like Joseph and

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Mary did, that Jesus can't be taken for granted. Like Mary and Joseph, we can't assume that Jesus will blithely accompany us in every one of our endeavors. Rather, we need to look at what Jesus is doing, how Jesus is being about the Father's business, and then look at ourselves, and how we can get on board with Him.

Are you being about the Father's business? Are you searching for Jesus and for the Father's work He is doing in the world today Are you ready and willing, like Mary and Joseph, to search diligently for Him, looking high and low until you find Jesus? And, are you ready for His response when you do find Him? Will you resolve and commit yourself to doing God's work wherever and whenever you find Jesus?

**Let us pray:** Great and mighty God, we have gone to Bethlehem in search of the Christ-child, Jesus, yet we have now turned away and follow our own paths. We have not continued to search for Jesus in our lives today, finding it hard to keep diligent, to hold our resolve. Just as you led the shepherds and the magi to the infant Jesus, just as you led Mary and Joseph to finding Jesus in the temple, lead us by Your Holy Spirit to see the work in which Jesus is present today and take us to Him so that we may work alongside our Lord and Master, doing Your work, being about Your business of bringing about Your kingdom and dominion of all creation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.