

Now Where Did I Put Him?

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One of the phrases I've probably said more than any other in my life is:

"Now where did I put that?"

I have what I like to call the gift of preoccupation.

I can put my keys somewhere perfectly logical, and five minutes later, that location has apparently been erased from human history.

My glasses. My phone. A book I was just reading. A piece of paper I absolutely could not lose.

The things I need most somehow end up in the most peculiar and apparently unforgettable places, and so I wander through the house asking:

"Where did I put that?"

This morning I was reading the second chapter of Luke when I came across a phrase that stopped me.

Mary and Joseph had been in Jerusalem for the Passover. When the celebration was over, they started home. They assumed Jesus was somewhere in the traveling company.

After all, He was twelve years old. Surely He was with relatives, friends, the other families making their journey back to Nazareth.

But after traveling for a day, they realized something:

Jesus wasn't there.

So they turned around. Yeah, they took a U-turn. They searched

for Him high and low, and Luke says:

“After three days they found him in the temple.”

After three days.

I read that this morning and thought, *I’ve heard that before.*

Three days.

I think you might know where I’m going with this.

Years later, another Mary would be looking for Jesus, and this time she knew exactly where He was supposed to be.

In a tomb.

Except He wasn’t there.

And that got me thinking.

Jesus Has Never Agreed to Stay Where We Put Him

Maybe one of the recurring lessons of the Gospels is this:

Jesus has never agreed to stay where we put Him.

Mary and Joseph assumed He was in the caravan, but He was in the temple.

And throughout His ministry, people were constantly trying to decide where Jesus belonged.

But He kept showing up somewhere else.

We put Him on the shore—

and He’s strolling across the water.

We put Him with adults—

and He's blessing children.

We put Him with the Jews—

and He's with a Samaritan woman.

We put Him with respectable people—

and He's eating with sinners.

We put Him in the synagogue—

and He's healing somebody, and He's not supposed to be doing that.

He's supposed to be *here*.

But He's not.

He's *there*.

We put Him at the head of the table, and—

wait a minute, where'd He go?

Oh.

He's washing feet.

We put Him with the crowds, and—

wait, we lost Him again.

He's slipping away.

He's supposed to be in bed. For goodness' sake, it's four in the morning.

But He's already got an appointment with His Father in a solitary place.

We think He should be on a stallion—

and He's riding a donkey.

We put Him on a cross when we thought last week He'd be on a throne.

And finally, we put Him in a tomb.

We roll a stone across the entrance.

We seal it.

We guard it.

There.

Surely Jesus will stay there.

Or so they thought.

And three days later—

He's gone.

Maybe the problem isn't that we keep losing Jesus.

Maybe the problem is that we keep assuming He should stay where we put Him.

God Tore the Curtain

Perhaps the clearest illustration of this uncontainable God happened on Good Friday when the veil split from top to bottom.

It was like God was saying:

"There. I fixed that for you."

God tore the curtain—

and we keep trying to sew new ones.

Curtains of race.

Class.

Denomination.

Politics.

Tradition.

Curtains that separate people who look like us from people who don't.

People who vote like us from people who don't.

People who worship like us from people who don't.

People whose stories make sense to us from people whose stories make us a little uncomfortable.

We keep building dividing walls—

and Jesus keeps walking through them.

He walked through Samaria.

He touched lepers.

He welcomed children.

He spoke with women whom respectable men avoided.

He ate with people religious leaders considered unclean.

He put people at the same table who probably would never have chosen to sit together.

Think about it.

Matthew was a tax collector for Rome, and Simon had been a zealot.

That ain't right.

One worked for the system.

The other wanted to overthrow it.

And Jesus said to both of them:

“Follow Me.”

That’s what Jesus does.

He crosses boundaries.

He tears curtains.

He walks through walls.

Where Will Jesus Lead Me?

And now comes the part that makes all of this more than a little interesting as we observe Jesus.

Christ lives in us.

We are His body.

We are His witnesses.

We’re His ambassadors.

Which means that following Jesus will eventually require us to follow Him across some boundary we would never cross.

Maybe toward someone we were taught to avoid.

Maybe into a conversation we don’t completely understand.

Maybe toward someone whose politics makes us uncomfortable.

Maybe toward someone from another denomination.

Another race.

Another social class.

Another generation.

Another story.

Because the question isn't simply:

Where can I find Jesus?

The better question may be:

Where will Jesus lead me?

And I have a suspicion that sometimes He will lead us
somewhere we never expected to go—

to love somebody we never expected to love—

to cross a boundary or a barrier we never thought we would
cross.

And maybe that's why my favorite Easter phrase is:

"He's not there."

Again, Jesus was exactly where He was supposed to be.

Maybe that's still true.

If we're looking for Him, we may find Him in the sanctuary.

But we also might find Him on the roadside.

At a dinner table.

In a hospital room.

Across uncomfortable divides.

Among the forgotten.

With the lonely.

Beside the person everybody else has passed by.

Jesus has never been very interested in staying where we put Him.

So discipleship means refusing to stay where people put us either.

The veil has been torn.

The tomb is empty.

Jesus is on the move.

And if we follow His lead, may we find ourselves carrying His grace into some very unexpected places.

So the next time I find myself wandering through the house asking,

“Now where did I put that?”

maybe I’ll remember this:

Jesus was never mine to put anywhere.

He is Lord.

He leads.

And my job is simply to follow.

Now I’m back to looking for my keys.

Take heart. Notice the scattered moments. Share the grace.

Listen to “Now Where Did I Put Him?”