

“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” Luke 2:49b (NIV)

This part of verse 49 really speaks to me. Not, like many people seem to feel with the motherly concern of Jesus not being where they thought he was, but more so the fact that in the here and now, we read the passage and this feels like an invitation to find Jesus where he is. He tells his earthy parents here that they should have known where to find him like it was the most logical thing in the world, and I wonder if this is Jesus reminding us now that if we truly want to find him, that we will know where to look...almost like an instinct, or sixth sense.

This thought process took me to other verses in the bible where we are told that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and that we are given life through the Spirit, and that we need to count ourselves dead to sin and not allow sin to rule us (Romans 6:11-14). Perhaps you have made a different connection with the scriptures, God speaks to us all differently, but these are the connections that feel right to me. I’ve been trying to Discern this and it’s application since Sunday night and now think I have some inkling of the Lord’s message to me, and, I pray, to you if you are reading this too.

First of all, Jesus is found in ‘His Father’s House’. Back in the first Century AD, God was believed to reside within the temple, the physical building where his people worshipped. As Jesus fulfilled his mission on the Cross on what we now refer to as Good Friday, the curtain the temple was split open - a symbol of God no longer being confined to the place of historic worship and the opening up of an invitation to the rest of the world - I believe God was never confined to the temple but was where He chose to reside, or a part of His being resided, to help us mortals to have an understandable place to provide worship. In a world where people struggle to believe in things they can’t see or touch or they can’t get their heads around, it makes sense that God would take His chosen people by the hand, meeting them where they are and leading them on to fuller understanding until He can give us the next level of understanding. Our God doesn’t change, but our understanding of Him does as He allows us to build on the knowledge and understanding of previous generations and then be taken to the next level when we are ready.

So the understanding of the temple changes. Our temple is no longer a physical place we have to travel to to be able to worship; rather we are now the temple. God resides in us as the Holy Spirit and this gives us the responsibility, or privilege of taking care of our bodies. For me, I know I haven’t taken as good care of my body physically as I should have, but it goes deeper than that. Our bodies need nourishment in physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally positive ways. This means that while we are chosen to be here on Earth, we have a responsibility to eat the foods and drinks that provide the nutrition that we need to live as independently as possible as long as possible. We need to move more - I don’t mean just physical exercise...not everyone can do what is formally considered exercise and sometimes just doing what we can within our own limitations is what is required. Spiritually we need to pray, read and study the bible and spend time with others who can assist us to stay motivated and worship in our own ways (not just singing and playing instruments - drawing, stitching, knitting, zoning into the silence where God speaks during a walk/run etc all count. Mentally and emotionally, deep breathing and meditation, spending time with those we trust, journalling or colouring all count.

So, to summarise, I feel God is calling me to start focussing on taking care of myself better (and being more disciplined with my writing!) as He gave me this body to be a vessel for the advancement of His kingdom. I believe that if you are reading this that you, also, may benefit from improvement in at least one of these areas to help enhance your relationship with God.

Pray

Lord, you gave us these bodies to take care of and we are highly aware that there is more we can be doing to look after them. Please show us where we fall short and teach us where we personally need to listen to your guiding voice more readily. Please also encourage us to not go too far and to become unhealthily obsessive. We know you ask your children to celebrate as well as fast and so we ask that you teach us when we should be fasting and when we should be feasting. Help us to find you within us, around us and in the things we see and touch each and every day before we let our feet touch the floor each morning. Amen.