

The First Sunday after Epiphany  
January 8, 2012


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+ Jesu juva +

### ABOUT ONE'S PROPER BUSINESS

I Kings 8:6-13; Romans 12:1-5; Luke 2:41-52

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

hat were you thinking? Didn't you know that we would be worried about you?!? That's what most parents would say in Mary and Joseph's situation. They had searched for Him for three days and finally they find Him in the temple speaking with the rabbis. He was safe! But what was He doing there? And Mary says to Him: "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

But Jesus makes neither apology nor excuse. Rather He says: "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" And with these words He teaches us something important. You see Jesus was not just Mary's son. He is also God's Son. It is true that as Mary's son He had an obligation of honoring her and ordinarily of obeying her. But He did not come down from heaven merely so that Mary could enjoy having a child. That was a happy byproduct, but He had come for something far greater. He had not come for her pleasure, He had come to be her Savior. And so as the family makes its way back to their home in Nazareth, Jesus also makes His way home, to His proper house as God's Son, to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Already, you see, He is about His saving work, the business His Father had sent Him to do. And what business is this? His business is proclaiming, teaching, and fulfilling the Word of His Father. St. John the Baptist said of Jesus: "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God." (John 3:31-34). And so we find Him today in the temple doing just that, speaking the words of God. By His questions He taught the teachers in such a way that they were astonished at His understanding. Yes, here the 12 year old Christ child is already fulfilling His vocation as His Father's Son, the Word made flesh who reveals to us the Person and the Glory of God.

When Solomon built the temple, we are told: "And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." And now in the third temple,

built not by Solomon but by Herod, the glory of the Lord again fills that house in such a way that the priests and rabbis are astonished, stop from their work, and must listen rather than teach.

But this was just the beginning of His work of proclaiming and fulfilling the Word and will of His Father. The fulfillment of His vocation must wait another 20 or so years, until the time that vocation carried Him back again to Jerusalem, back to the Temple, and then away to a hill outside of the city and to a cross and death, where His Father's business would at last be fully accomplished in the sacrifice of the Son to win for us the forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation with the Father through the blood of the Son. Yes, Mary, why do you seek Him anywhere other than His Father's house? For He was keen to fulfill His holy vocation, to be about His Father's business for which He had come down.



And we too, who have been made sons of God through the baptismal washing of Christ's blood, ought to be about our Father's business too. We should be about the things He would have us doing as His children. Now some take this to mean that we ought to drop everything and, like the twelve-year-old Jesus, sit about in the Temple doing holy and spiritual things like discussing the Scriptures, or evangelizing or some other work for the Church. And while such things have their place, you must remember that you are not Jesus. What He was called to do, the vocation He was given, is not what you are necessarily called to do, for you have your own vocations from God. Yes, studying Scripture, having a solid devotional life, and spending time in prayer are part of your vocation as a Christian, but they are not your only vocation. These things serve to help maintain your faith and fuel you for the other vocations God has given you, you must spend most of your time and energies each day.

And some will use the pursuit of what they deem the more spiritual things to ignore the things God has actually called them to do. So read and meditate on your Scriptures, pray and do good works in your Church, but in doing so, do not neglect the things God has given you to do in your daily life. Do not neglect your family. Do not slack off at your job. Do not ignore your children. Do not become a monk of your own homemade order. For that is not what God has called most of you to be.

You see, you are most truly about your Father's business when you are fulfilling the calling and vocation He has given you in particular. Not all are called to handle the Word of God as their main vocation. Pastors are. Evangelists (in the Biblical sense of that word) are. But you are not all pastors and none of you are

evangelists to the best of my knowledge. Some of you are students. Some of you are fathers or mothers. Some of you are children. Some of you are in business. Some of you teach. Some of you are doctors. Some lawyers. Some repair men. Some homemakers. And all of these things are holy callings from God, and should be treated as such by you. They are holy, because these are places where you will touch the lives of others, where you will sacrifice of yourself and serve your neighbor. God does not need your good works, after all, but your neighbor does.

This is why St. Paul speaks the way He does in Romans 12, which we heard this morning: "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." The various vocations we have been given are part of what make us different members of the one body, and also part of what makes the body work. Elsewhere, in I Corinthians 12, the Apostle says: "If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased..."

But there are times where the foot might rather be a hand, or the eye would rather be a an ear, where the mother who stays at home to raise children would rather be a business woman, or where the man who saves lives as a doctor would rather have a 9 to 5 job doing something easier, or where the laborer with a 9-5 job would like something that would bring a little more dignity and honors, or where the student would rather study only what she has a real interest in rather than the mundane things required, or where the pastor would rather be a furniture maker. We all struggle with our vocations at times. But we have each been given the callings we have by God. Now it is true those callings may change at some point in life, but while we have them, we must be diligent to do them, to be about the business our Father has given us to do.

This is why St. Paul speaks in terms of sacrifice here: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." And sacrifice is rarely easy. It takes serious dedication. It takes prayer. It takes diligent seeking of God's grace and strength.

Our flesh, however, would have nothing of sacrifice and of diligence. It would rather be indulged, and so it seeks ways to avoid what we are actually given to do, and to replace that with things that you can somehow justify doing instead. But this is the way of the world, the way of avoiding the Father's business. And so St. Paul says: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Given business to be done by our Father, we all would fail miserably to fulfill it. We would not prove what is good and acceptable to Him, but only what we think is good and acceptable, which is rarely what He wills. And so St. Paul urges us to be transformed. And how are we to be transformed so that we can live as God our Father wills, so that we can fulfill the vocations He has given us? By the renewing of our minds, Paul says. In other words, by the Word of God which has the power to change us, to renew us, to strengthen us, to forgive and revive us, for in the Word of God, is the grace and power of Christ our Lord who speaks it and who has fulfilled it.

But even when we are in Christ we fail to do our Father's business fully. Much of the time we fail to sacrifice quite as much as we should. We remain sinners in this life. So thanks be to God that Christ Jesus came down to save sinners.

He fulfilled His vocation perfectly. He lived without sin to fulfill for us sinners that which we could never do. And He died to free us from the power of sin and to forgive us all our failures to be about our Father's business. He has forgiven your slackness and your discontent, your trying to do things by your own power, and your despair over your inability to perform them as you thought you could, your misplaced pieties, and your failures at keeping true piety, your longing for less, and your longing for more. In short, He has removed and forgiven all your sin, and now proclaims it to you. He restores you to fellowship with the Father, and strengthens you by the power of His Word. That was His vocation when He came down to earth as Mary's son. And that is His vocation even now, who is eternally God's Son. Now to Christ Jesus be all honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, to life everlasting.

+ Soli Deo gloria +