



Hear the Word

from Pastor Drew J. Yoos



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

First Sunday of Christmas

December 30, 2018

Are You Overwhelmed?

Luke 2:41-52

When I worked as an area director at camp I remember one particular week

- I was in charge of 8 counselors and more than 50 MIDDLE SCHOOLERS
- and things weren't going well
- one counselor in particular couldn't ever seem to show up on time, would act disrespectfully towards me, and had just a bad attitude.
- About halfway through the week I went to Pastor Mary, the director and told her:
 - I don't know what to do
 - This counselor is causing me so much trouble
 - He never listens to me, he's never on time

And, of course, I was expecting Pastor Mary to say something pastoral like, "I'm so sorry" "It sounds like you're having a rough time, let me help you."

-Instead she asked as calmly as possible- "Are you overwhelmed?"

Indignant, I said, "NO, I'm not OVERWHELMED, it's not even my fault."

And she said, annoyingly calm, "You sound overwhelmed. Because you are whining, blaming, and generalizing."

- your tone is whiny
- you are blaming someone else for your problem
- and you are generalizing- is it really true that he has NEVER ONCE been on time?

OK, So maybe I am overwhelmed.

And a few weeks later when a counselor came to me saying:

- None of my kids are listening to me!"
- "Jack is the reason no one is ever on time"
- "I just don't know what to do?"

I was able to calmly ask, "Are you overwhelmed?"

It's still a go-to phrase I use, especially in dealing with middle schoolers

-And it's become really easy to recognize whining, blaming, and generalizing

And it's not like I'm belittling you at all when I ask that- because I GET it

-Dealing with kids can be overwhelming

-Kids, dealing with other kids can be overwhelming can't it?

-Parents, having kids can be overwhelming

-And, by the way, coworkers, spouses, adult children, can all be overwhelming too.

And so of course what Bible story do we get on the 1st Sunday of Christmas but one where Jesus is a middle schooler?

-And he's got some 12-year-old sass to him

-And Jesus' parents treat him like a middle schooler when they can't find him

-“Where have you been?”

-“How could you do this to us?”

-“We've looked everywhere!”

-What does that sound like? Whining, blaming, generalizing

-And in case you missed the point, the exact words from Mary's mouth are- “We have been searching for you in great ANXIETY.”

-Mary, Joseph- Are you overwhelmed?

-Sure, we could act like this is a story about 12-year-old Jesus' rebellious streak

-But this is clearly a story about Mary and Joseph, about their anxiety

-It's a story about what it feels like to be overwhelmed

-And when we find ourselves overwhelmed, how come it's so difficult to find Jesus?

And I've told many of you this- but “M” really is a great sleeper

-She sleeps for long stretches sometimes and doesn't really wake up fussy very much

-But she is an 8 week old baby

-So she has some trouble sleeping sometimes

-And because she's a baby, I fully expect her to wake up a few times throughout the night and have trouble getting back to sleep. That's just normal

But still when it happens, I whine (dramatically): ...Ugh.. why can't you just go to sleep?

-But as you know, in that moment, my problem is not that my baby won't go to sleep.

-Just like the problem wasn't the counselor who had a bad attitude and the problem wasn't sassy middle school Jesus in the temple.

-The problem is how I'm reacting to it- the problem is that I'm overwhelmed, that I'm anxious, that I feel like I have lost control of the situation

Ask Mary and Joseph what it feels like to lose control of a situation

-Try keeping your head on straight when something goes wrong or your kid is lost

- And not just any kid, Jesus is lost, the one God said would be special.
- In this big, scary world, they have lost control and they can't seem to find Jesus anywhere.
- Isn't that always how it goes?

Think about your own moments of anxiety from this week or this year.

- The moments when you have been caught whining, blaming or generalizing.
- In those moments, when you were overwhelmed or when it just felt like you had lost control, where was Jesus?
- Where was God's source of reconciling love for all people? Probably nowhere to be found.
- And beyond even the day to day anxiety of our lives, like Mary we also have great anxiety as we try to search for Jesus in a world where he often seems nowhere near us.
- It can leave us whining- "Where are you Jesus?!"
- It can leave us blaming others- well the reason Jesus is so tough to see is because those OTHER Christians keep ruining it for the rest of us.
- It can leave us generalizing- I NEVER know what Jesus is up to in my life.

-And how does Jesus respond to our anxiety?

- After looking for days, Mary and Joseph come storming into the temple, full of anxiety, whining, blaming, and generalizing, ready to let Jesus really have it.
- And with the annoying calm, Jesus asks them a question, might as well have been, "Are you overwhelmed?" but his words are really, "Why were you searching?"
- It turns out all of that parental anxiety isn't about the misbehaving kid, it's about how much parents need control.
- And Jesus' response begins to set his parents free from that control by assuring them that he is in control of the situation.
- Jesus knows exactly what he's doing, he doesn't need his parents keeping tabs on him.
- In fact his parents are going to have to learn to let go of that control quickly.
- Before too long, they will see their son thrown out of the synagogue.
- They'll see him ridiculed by religious leaders.
- And ultimately they'll see him suffer in unspeakable ways and die.

But what does it mean for us that Jesus sets us free from the illusion of control?

Maybe you've heard the phrase- let go and let God- I'll be honest. That just annoys me.

- No thanks, God. I've got it under control
- It's just hard, when I look around at the randomness of the world and the pain there just isn't a lot of evidence that Jesus is actually in control.
- A lot of times, it's just easier to put faith in myself than it is in Jesus.

-But here is 12-year-old, middle school Jesus telling his parents, in all their anxiety, to LET GO of their need for control.

-And when you think about it that way, Let go and let God isn't offering you some false hope.

-It's not telling you to just sit back and relax while God sorts things out.

-No this saying, this story of Jesus is offering you something much more practical...salvation.

-Not just the go to heaven after you die salvation, but every day, nitty gritty, this life salvation.

-Saving us from our need to be in control.

-Helping us let go of that overwhelming anxiety, whether its from kids or what a new year may bring or your job, your bank account, your home repair, your in-laws, or even your pain and suffering.

-Even in those moments when Jesus seems nowhere near, salvation comes through Letting go.

-Because Jesus is in control.

-So, people of God, I have to ask- Are you overwhelmed?

-Jesus isn't.

-And this is a hard lesson for Jesus' parents and it's a hard lesson for us because anxiety is real and it's constant.

-And even In the end, Jesus' parents still don't understand what it means to let go of control.

-And we certainly don't understand what that means.

-But in those moments when you realize your own overwhelmedness, Jesus is not lost.

-In this story is that Jesus was never the lost one, Mary was, Joseph was, we are.

-But even in our greatest anxiety, we have been found.