

THE JESUS PEOPLE MET - A SON WHO KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS TO BE - LUKE 2:41-52

When we work our way through the gospels, we read of many people that Jesus encountered. Rich people like the young ruler, poor people like the widow giving her coin into the temple plate. Sick people, mad people, leaders, critics, parents, and so on.

In these next few weeks I'd like to open Luke's gospel and consider some encounters with the emphasis on Jesus, that different people met.

Of course it's the same Jesus every time, but in different times and situations different aspects are revealed of who Jesus is by how he responds. And Luke records these encounters for that very reason.

In many respects the Jesus people met is really Jesus at different points in his life and ministry.

And the first one today is:

A SON WHO KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS TO BE - LUKE 2:41-52

In today's passage Jesus apparently gets lost, when he is 12 years old.

Many parents have stories of a child lost, and perhaps some of you have a story about being lost.

But today, perhaps more accurately, this is an account of when Jesus' parents got lost.

And it's an unusual account for three reasons. Firstly it's told only by Luke and tells us some very important things about Jesus and ourselves. 4 things I can see anyway.

1. Jesus' Childhood was Normal and Loving

The second thing – this is the only story about Jesus as a child apart from the events surrounding his birth.

But stories about Jesus as a child were plentiful at the time when Luke was writing, and after. Probably one of the most well-known accounts comes from the Gospel of Thomas in which there are stories of the boy

Jesus making birds out of mud and they fly away, and cursing various children who annoy him.

This and many other so-called gospels have one thing in common – they were known about but not accepted by early church leaders as authoritative (not historically true) and were not accepted by people as inspired by the Holy Spirit as the word of God.

In contrast to other fake stories in the early New Testament, Mary's and Joseph's raising of Jesus' childhood was normal, and well normal!

We can safely assume that Jesus grew up as a happy, healthy boy, as children do. First teeth, then first lost tooth, fell over as a toddler, bruises playing with his siblings and friends. Just like every child there were many firsts.

He learned to read, certainly what we call the OT, because he later knew it well as an adult, and read it out aloud in Luke 4. And he wrote in the dust at the confrontation with the pharisees and the woman caught in adultery and about to be stoned.

Now what I have said is partly an argument from silence. But Mary would have had many stories and memories, but the lack of any recorded stories about Jesus as a child and youth is because they were not important to the gospel accounts about Jesus.

His childhood is of great interest to us perhaps, but we can safely assume it was largely unremarkable.

But Luke records **this** account though because it was remarkable.

The mention of Joseph here is informative because **both** Jesus' parents played their part in loving Jesus and raising him. They clearly did family stuff, like an annual holiday to Jerusalem for the Passover.

From a small place like Nazareth, going to the big city would have been very exciting. They almost certainly would have stayed with extended family, looked around Jerusalem, and probably did some shopping.

Later as they headed home, it was a happy trip in company of extended family and friends, and Jesus' absence spoke much about how

responsible Jesus was as a young man. They trusted him clearly and had confidence in him, from experience.

All this points to the fact that **1. Jesus' Childhood was Normal and Loving**. He was growing up in a lovely family in a small village, with lots of happy memories and life experiences.

2. Jesus' Youth was Shaped by a Godly Upbringing

Why can we know that? Consider these verses in Luke 2:

²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"^[b]),

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.

Jesus grew up in a Jewish family with parents who led disciplined and godly lives of faith. Joseph and Mary observed the law and the statutes instituted by God for Israel, as God's holy people.

Accordingly, Jesus' family life was marked by daily prayers in the home as well as Bible readings, synagogue on the Sabbath, and sabbath school.

Tithes and offerings were made routinely, festivals and special days were celebrated – in other words Jesus was raised to be a godly faith filled Jewish young man.

This is underscored by the passage noting that **⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴² When**

he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. Just the same as every year.

The Temple was the largest building a young apprentice builder would have seen. It must have been inspiring for Jesus. But of even greater interest must have been:

- * the offerings and sacrifices taking place,
- * the priests and officials buzzing about
- * the noise and activity
- * the solemnity of worship
- * being in the place that was central to the life of Israel in God's presence.

And at age 12 Jesus was in his year of bar mitzvah, a time and ceremony when he became an adult in faith becoming a son of the commandments for himself.

Jesus' upbringing trained him in faith and godliness like his parents. And he must have been told of the events surrounding his birth, and the prophecies made about him by Simeon and Anna.

But more than that he would have been told and learned for himself of the prophecies in the OT about the Son of God, the son of Man, the Messiah and the King of Israel.

We're told in vs 52 *Jesus **grew in wisdom and stature**, and in favour with God and man.*

Jesus wasn't pretending to be a baby, a toddler, a child, and adolescent. Jesus was not some sort of messianic prodigy or spiritual savant. At every stage of growing up he grew like we do, yet without sin.

As Jesus grew up, he grew in his understanding of who he was and his relationship with his Heavenly Father. He did that within godly parenting and family life and ,through his growth in knowledge and understanding from the Bible of his time, and his lived experience of faith.

1. Jesus' Childhood was Normal and Loving
2. Jesus' Youth was Shaped by a Godly Upbringing

3. Jesus' Adulthood was Characterised by a Growing Thirst for God

Which brings us to the event that is told in this story.

It's a coming-of-age story in the very best way possible.

At twelve, and on the cusp of responsible adult faith Jesus finds himself in the temple, and he drinks in the experience of independent faith in his Heavenly Father.

He had been to the temple every year, but his growth in age, and maturity and spiritual maturity means that now He doesn't want to leave. He wants it to never end. The religious teachers were impressed, even astounded, by the depth of insight that he had, and the questions he asked.

Very possibly even then he was forming a critical view of the Temple goings on, and perhaps he was still at that age wanting to ask why, why, why?

Either way he stayed in the temple and didn't leave Jerusalem when his parents did.

Was that irresponsible of Jesus, or his parents?

As I said before clearly his parents knew Jesus to be reliable and responsible to have not known where he was all day, heading home. When they discover him missing, they head back, but the temple is not their first port of call to look for him.

And when they do find him, he is surprised that they would not think to look first where they found him.

The account is not meant to apportion blame on Jesus or his parents. But it was a learning moment for Mary and Joseph, that their boy was becoming a man.

Mary said, "Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

⁴⁹ *"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"⁴⁹ (Or be about my Father's business) ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

There is a play on fathers here. Jesus reveals a growing awareness that His heavenly Father is his primary parent and father. And Jesus had to love and obey him first.

So it was a learning moment for his parents who didn't fully understand what was happening in their son's life.

⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Jesus as a person was growing into a mature understanding of who he was and what God wanted of him. So it was a learning experience for Jesus too.

And he returns with his parents, content to remain parentally obedient until a future time.

1. Jesus' Childhood was Normal and Loving
2. Jesus' Youth was Shaped by a Godly Upbringing
3. Jesus' Adulthood was Characterised by a Growing Thirst for God
- 4. Jesus' Life and Death was Defined by the Incarnation**

Paul writes in Philippians 2 Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

How Christ did that is never explained that satisfies all our questions. But it means that Jesus set aside all that prevented him becoming fully human.

So, we return to the question: why did Luke include this event in Jesus' life? Why did God include this event in his written word?

It is easy to imagine that Theophilus and others would ask: Was Jesus really a man? Later on, did Jesus' childhood reveal why he was rejected by the Jews. Was he a trouble maker? Did the leaders reject him because he went too far?

This account shows that from the start Jesus lived a godly faithful Jewish life. He was rejected because he was too godly for Israel! He lived in the heart of Jewish covenantal faith, and his reflected badly on the Jewish leaders who should have and weren't.

Conclusion

These words of Jesus to Mary are the first recorded words of Jesus in the gospels.

And they reveal three important learning points.

1) Jesus is in the temple because, he wants to be in his Father's house, he needs to be close to God, he wants to study God's word. So when they find him, he's sitting there among the teachers. He's sought out teachers of the Bible, He's listening to them, he's asking them questions, and he's giving them answers that astonish them.

He's in the heart of the Covenantal faith of Israel, and it fills him with joy. He wants to know more, everything.

John Piper says that when had been a professor at Bethel, which was a religiously affiliated school, He had taught Bible and religion at Bethel, and he made this observation:

“In my years of full time teaching, I have found that only about one person in ten really wants to understand more of God than they already know.”

Is that true of me, or you? Do you have a thirst for God, to drink in more of him and know and love him more?

2.) Secondly, *“Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?”⁴⁹ 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

Even Jesus' parents were learning what it meant about who Jesus is. He is learning but so must they.

And so Luke poses to the question to Theophilus and us? Who do you decide Jesus is? What's your decision?.....

3.) And finally, these first words of Jesus here at the beginning of his life in Luke's gospel, "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house," resonate with his last words on the cross, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Even at that early age, Jesus felt the deep and abiding love of his Father in heaven, and was deeply moved by his growing love for the Father.

Even at that early age Jesus gives us a model of how we should see the Father, how he should occupy the first and foremost position of importance in our own minds and hearts.

After all, it is this love of God, whom we come to know intimately in and through Jesus, that make our love for one another both possible and meaningful.

This is the paradoxical reality of our faith. It is in loving God that we become true disciples of Jesus.

Who was the Jesus his parents and the church leaders met that day.

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A person who loves God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength.

A person whose greatest passion is to know God as Father, and be his child.

A person who says to God I am your servant,

Let us pray: Jesus, fill our hearts with love for the Father, a love so real and so profound that we will joyfully say to him, "your will be done."

Let your will be done by us in some way today, as it is done perfectly in heaven by your angels and saints.

Instil in us a love so great that we will willingly share it freely and compassionately with others who long for such a love in their lives. We desire with all of our heart, all of our mind, and all of our strength, to one day dwell in Your house with You, forever. In your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen!