

I'M NOT LOST, I'M JUST EXPLORING



The Story of Jesus in the Temple

The way to love anything is to realize that it might be lost. ~ G. K Chesterton

Scripture:

Luke 2:41-52

This is the story of the Son of God at age twelve.

41. Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.
42. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.
43. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.
44. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.
45. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.
46. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.
47. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.
48. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."
49. He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"
50. But they did not understand what he said to them.
51. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.
52. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.



LOST IN THE TEMPLE

In ancient Israel every Jewish family was encouraged to travel to Jerusalem for three major feasts: the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, and the Feast of the Passover. Devout Jews would make the trip year after year. It is not surprising to read in Luke that Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem every year for the Feast of the Passover.

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the

custom . . . (New American Standard Bible) Luke 2:41-42

Why did Luke tell us about this trip to Jerusalem? There appear to be three reasons.

- The first reason is that when a Jewish boy reaches the age of twelve, he is declared to be a man and a "Son of the Covenant" or a "Son of the Law." A Bar Mitzvah was held as a celebration of this significant step in his life. After the Bar Mitzvah he was expected to 1) keep the Law, 2) learn a trade, and 3) attend a great Jewish feast.

- The second reason is that the annual Passover, a great Jewish feast celebrating Israelites' exodus out of Egypt, was occurring once again.
- But the third and most important reason has to do with Jesus and what occurred during this visit. Jesus got lost. ... and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. (NASB) Luke 2:43-44

Together with the Infancy Narratives, this is everything we know about the first thirty years of Jesus' life.

Some have argued that the story is a legend created by the early church to fill in some of the gaps in their knowledge of Jesus' life. Others say this is consistent with what we know about Jesus, and it is a dramatic foreshadowing of things which were yet to come. This is a symbolic story, and there is something in here we are supposed to learn.

**Not everyone who wanders is lost.
Jesus may have been born into humble
circumstances, but his parents
and grand parents made certain
that he was not a mutt.**

AFTER THE FACT

This story of his development becomes important only after the culmination of Jesus' ministry. The first books of the New Testament were letters of Paul describing the crucifixion and resurrection. Later the details of the birth were assembled and several stories of his youth, most of which were not included in the Bible.

The gospel writers were not interested in feeding the pious curiosity of the church with legends about Jesus' childhood. They are content to leave almost thirty years of blank space in Jesus' life because their interest was on the fulfillment of the gospel.

This story which Luke does include in 2:41-52 is so modest that it is very unlike most of the legends of Jesus' childhood. It does not portray Him

as doing any supernatural deed or speaking in an unduly authoritative way. The main point is not in a supernatural feat but in the sentence: "I must be about my Father's business (or in my Father's house)."

WHAT ARE THE OTHER STORIES?

Here's one from the Gospel of Thomas (second century): Jesus, at age five, was playing in pools of water that he had gathered and he made the waters clean and commanded it by his word alone. When another boy made the water dirty, Jesus zapped the boy and the lad withered up completely.

In another story, a boy bumped into Jesus and Jesus was exasperated. Jesus said to the boy, "You shall not go further on your way," and the child immediately fell down and died.

So after such stories, the account in Luke 2:41-52 seems a bit drab -- and that is precisely what speaks in favor of its authenticity. It does not appear to be motivated by a desire to overplay Jesus' uniqueness.

BUT GREAT CHALLENGES PRODUCE GREAT PEOPLE.

The story of Jesus in the Temple was the embarrassment. Verse 43-46: There were many people in this group who went to Jerusalem, but when they left, they couldn't find him. They sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking him. After three days, they found him in the temple."

Verses 46-47: "They found him in the temple sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." What were they talking about? This is a conference we would all have loved to sit in on. Part of the relationship between teachers and students is the role of listening, querying and answering.

SO WHAT DO WE LEARN?

Jesus knew and loved the law from an early age. Twenty years later he would return and challenge the law in this very spot.

Verses 48-50: Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house (or about his business). And

they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them.

"*They did not understand Jesus*" --- is Luke's way of saying to us the readers: "there's more here than meets the eye. This is the point, don't miss it." (cf. Luke 18:34)

THE LESSON:

At a point when some people thought Jesus was lost, Jesus thought of himself as found.

HERE'S A POEM ON A SIMILAR SUBJECT. IT'S TITLE: "EXPLORING" (WRITTEN BY A MODERN AUTHOR)

The studies

that seemed a distraction from my college goal
became the pathway
to a career.

The travels

that had no connection to my daily work,
became the subjects
of my sermons.

The people

who seemed mere tangents to a full circle
became the people
who are hardest for forget.

The canine who had no connection
to earning a wage or paying the bill,
became the joyful companion
who licked my face when I returned home.

The young woman

who nurtured my restlessness,
and who challenged my certainties,
became the mother of our children.

The times

I felt that I might have been lost,
turned out to be the moments
when I was just exploring.

These discoveries

lead to new rooms filled with attractive artifacts,
and further narrow gates,
that lead to life itself.

Maybe you could write a poem like that too.

THE PUPPY

Did you hear how President-elect Barack Obama responded to a reporter's question about the puppy that he promised his two daughters?

The main topic of the day was the economy, but on Friday, President-elect Barack Obama did say at his first press conference since his election that he is dealing with a topic close to home.

"With respect to the dog," said Obama, "this is a major issue." He said it has generated the most interest on his Web-site, but before a new addition is made to the family, "two criteria have to be reconciled."

One is that elder daughter Malia, 10, "is allergic, so it has to be hypoallergenic." The other is that "our preference would be to get a shelter dog," which would point to the possibility of a mixed breed, or, as Obama said, "a mutt, like me."

(He said, "We would have gotten them a puppy win or lose.")

HISTORIC

No matter how you feel about the election, the story of the election of Barack Obama to the presidency is historic.

"Mutt" seems a bit harsh, but I wish Barack's grandmother could have lived to see what happened on Tuesday.

This is week that will be remembered in history. And what ever happens next is a new book. But the growth of a man, raised by grandparents, and sent to good places of education in hopes of overcoming a tough start, is a compelling story. If there is hope for one, there is hope for all.

There were celebrations around the world.

Others declared that *I fought hard, but this is the man who will be my president.*

And by the way, the man elected is also of African ancestry.

IN SANTA ROSA

The election was significant in Santa Rosa this week as well, with the election of Efren Carrillo to the Board of Supervisors and Ernesto Olivares to City Council, the first Latinos elected to those offices.

I don't want to say anything more about politics than that today. There are still many issues that are left to be resolved, and some of them brought pain to members of our congregation.

But what is true of this recent chapter in American history, and true of the life of Jesus Christ, is that the times when we thought we might have been lost can become the times of our greatest discoveries.

We need to give ourselves the same room to explore, at all ages and stages of life, that the Obama children will give their new puppy when they introduce him to a new home.

In God's kingdom there are no mutts. Everyone deserves a chance. Beginnings are not outcomes. The problem with many people is that they give up too soon. Thank God for those who don't.

What is historic about this election is that the man who was elected did not give up too soon, although it is clear that there were many times when no one would have blamed him if he had.

In the New Testament, this story about the youth of Jesus is called foreshadowing.

Closer to home, the times when the president-elect appeared to be lost turned out to be times when he, too, was exploring, compiling, evaluating, and testing. We need to allow ourselves times just like this in our own lives.



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