

## **Luke 2:41-52**

Has Jesus gotten away from us?

Have we been so busy with rituals and family and the general busyness of life that we, like Mary and Joseph, have lost track of Jesus?

And if so...where do we go to find Him again?

The fact that Mary and Joseph made the trek to Jerusalem yearly indicates that they were devout Jews. And they were raising Jesus according to their faith tradition. Tradition, because we all need to start somewhere. Being part of a faith community is important. It gives us a foundation. AND The fact that Luke describes Jesus as 12 years old is important. Jewish boys were under their father's instruction until they became 13 years old. The father would direct the boy's behavior, ensuring the law was kept. Then, at age 13, Jewish boys were responsible for keeping the law on their own...without anyone telling them what to do. They had reached a level of spiritual maturity. Bar mitzvah is Hebrew for "son of commandment." When a Jewish boy turns 13, he has all the rights and obligations of a Jewish adult, including the commandments of the Torah. Our scripture today is indicating that Jesus became spiritually mature, independent of whatever Joseph could teach him, earlier than ritually observed. When Jesus decides to stay in the temple, he isn't being disobedient, he is indicating his advanced spiritual maturity. The fact that he is conversing with the teachers so handily underscores Jesus' intuitive understanding of scripture.

The infancy gospel of Thomas is a non-canonical text that was written in the second century. It is a collection of stories about Jesus' behavior from age 5-12, and it ends with the same story we have just read today. It was written sometime in the second century. This infancy Gospel is not part of our Bibles today, but it can at least illustrate what kind of stories were

floating around in ancient Christianity about Jesus as a boy. In this gospel, Joseph has a difficult time controlling Jesus' actions. For instance, in one story, on a sabbath day Jesus decides to make 12 doves out of clay. Another boy sees this and runs and tells Joseph who then goes to Jesus and asks why Jesus would do such a thing on the sabbath. Jesus simply waves his hands over the birds, who then instantly come to life and fly away. And Jesus looks up at Joseph and says, "do what?". Also, in this infancy Gospel of Thomas Jesus kills and then resurrects a few of his friends after they behave badly toward him. So Joseph, in an attempt to control Jesus appoints school teacher after teacher, and that does not work out very well as Jesus ends up being the one to do the teaching...I must add that one of the teachers strikes Jesus and meets an untimely demise as a result. Don't worry, Jesus does bring him back to life eventually. Now, these stories, except the last one about Jesus remaining in the temple, are not scriptural. But they do give us insight into what 2nd century Christians were thinking about what Jesus' childhood might have looked like. And what all of the stories have in common is that Jesus came into his spiritual maturity apart from any human conditioning. Jesus' authority and learning came from God, his Divine father.

And yet, Jesus was in the temple when Mary and Joseph found Him. Because Being part of a faith community is important. When we baptized Khloe into our faith community, we committed ourselves to helping her grow and mature in the faith. But there will come a time when her spiritual life will become her own responsibility.

We are all responsible for our own Spiritual growth. Our spiritual growth should not stop at any point in our lives. It is easy to slip into a status quo type of religious mindset, instead of a growth mindset. Growth mindsets

require change and Change is uncomfortable. But remember that the word that Jesus begins his ministry with is. “Metanoia” or “Change your mind”. Jesus is giving us a template here in our scripture...If Jesus himself grew in understanding, so should we. If your understanding of scripture is the exact same understanding as when you got confirmed as a middle schooler, you may want to revisit your inner temple.

That’s why, as a faith community, we must **encourage** growth. We must always be learning with and from each other...challenging each other...supporting each other. That’s why we come to the building we call the church. That’s what this building is doing for **us**, the **Church**.

God is a mystery. As St. Augustine famously said, “If you understand God, then what you understand isn’t God”. But God is not a mystery as in something that can’t be known at all, but rather a mystery in the sense that God can never be fully known...God is always revelation...always more to see, more to experience...always surprising us.

Has Jesus gotten away from us? Hopefully he has. Hopefully we are forced to keep looking for Him to keep seeing God in unexpected places. ...And at the same time, we know where to find Him. He’s right here, in the body of Christ that we all are. In the mystery of God, hopefully we are recognizing Jesus right here in our hearts as our source every moment of every day.

Jesus, as a twelve year old in the temple, is illustrating that There is a balance between the inner authority that we all have in this unity as God’s image, and the outer faith family that we share together as the body of Christ. In the west, we have mostly lost the tradition of inner experience. We prefer being told things about God, rather than experiencing God. We like the God routine. Not the God experience. We are like Tevye singing

‘TRADITION!’”, Forgetting that the point of that song is that the fiddler is up on the roof. Having that rooftop experience...and what gives him the foothold to sustain his balance is tradition. Without the experience of God, the tradition is dry. And pointless. So...Prayer, meditation, simply being with God quietly...wherever we tap into our inner experience...we should be engaging in these disciplines. They are the compliment to our attendance at church.

Jesus clearly has a relationship with God. He **is** the God experience. Yet Jesus goes to the temple. And he keeps going to the temple...all through his ministry.

Sometimes we do lose Jesus, we can't find Him within, even though He's there, and we feel lost. When that happens, we have the body of Christ here in the temple to remind us. May we always be found here, going about our Father's business.