

Luke 2:41-52

So what was Jesus like as a boy? The gospel writers don't tell us too much. This story, found only in Luke, is the most detailed one we have and it does not really say too much either.

Some people have rushed to fill in the void. On the book table at the back I've set a book called, "The Lost Books of the Bible". It was compiled in 1926 from bits and pieces of stories about Jesus, none of which were considered by the church to be reliable enough to be included in the Bible.

"A woman with leprosy is cured when she goes to Mary and is washed with the water used to bathe the baby".

Jesus is playing hide and seek with his friends. He is 'it'. It turns out that some women put his friends in a furnace to hide. Jesus turns them into kid goats, then, he changes them back into boys again.

There's more where that came from.

What we do have in the Bible is this story. It tells us that Jesus was raised in a faithful family. Exodus 23 says, "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me". One of those was the Passover. So, of course Joseph and Mary will be in Jerusalem at the temple for the Passover. Where else would they be?

In the year that Jesus was 12, just before his bar mitzvah, when he would become an adult, they were in Jerusalem for the Passover.

Joseph and Mary were part of a faithful community. There is a kind of sweetness to the story that they were able to travel a whole day from Jerusalem without seeing Jesus. But he was a responsible boy and they were not worried about him. He knew the drill. Of course he was with his friends or his cousins, who had all made the trip as well.

Does the story feel familiar to you too? Families worship together, kids hang out together. If there is a kid missing, they must be with.....

But gradually, they feel Jesus' absence. Mary and Joseph start to ask questions and finally realize that he must have stayed behind in Jerusalem. They have been on the road for a day already. It is another day back to the city. There they spend a day searching. They check the markets, every place that a twelve year old might be. It does not occur to them that he could still be in the temple.

Finally, they find him. Even as all those parent feelings of relief and anger wash over them, they cannot help notice how comfortable and 'at home' he looks, surrounded by teachers, listening to them and asking questions, and everyone is listening to him! And everyone is obviously impressed with what he is saying.

Does a bit of parental pride mix with the relief and anger?

"That's our boy over there!"

Mary pulls Jesus aside. "Son, why did you do this to us?"

"Your father and I have been looking everywhere for you!"

Jesus has one more astonishing answer, “Why were you searching for me, didn’t you know that I have to be in my Father’s house?”

But they didn’t understand what he was saying.

Jesus went home with them and was obedient to them, he grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men, and Mary treasured all these things in her heart.

And that is it.

So let’s think about it together.

Does it seem strange to you that his parents are completely clued out about Jesus? “They didn’t understand what he was saying”? How could they not, given the angels and shepherds and those old people in the temple? Mary don’t you know? Apparently not.

Before we think that they must be very dense, or that there is a part of them that is rejecting who Jesus is or anything like that, let me suggest that the way this gospel is written, we are given scenes, like separate scenes from a play. This scene stands alone from the others. **We** remember events from earlier in the chapter, because it is written for us. The characters themselves do not.

So what do we see?

The faithfulness of Jesus' family and his childhood is Jewish faithfulness. In telling us this story Luke says, "Remember the connection of the Christian church to Jewish faith and faithfulness."

We see the story begin to hint at themes that will be unpacked in Jesus' life and work.

1. There is this tension between loyalty to family and loyalty to his mission. That will come up again and again.

Because it is a real family there is anxiety. "Where is he?!"

Because it is a real family there is confusion. "What is with that kid?!"

Because Jesus is living a real life, there is a real and growing awareness of who he is and what God is calling him to be and do.

Over and over again we will see family tension around Jesus. It always comes down to this: "Obedience to God, trumps family ties".

And later Jesus says to two guys, "Follow me". But the one man said, "first let me go and bury my father", and the other said, "I will follow you Lord, but first let me say good bye to my family". Which sounds reasonable.... but Jesus says these radical things like, "let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God". (Luke 9)

It is a theme we will come back to as we walk with Jesus through Luke. Right now it raises questions.

Something else here... 3 days... For three days his parents are anxious and in despair. Jesus is gone and they cannot find him. One of my friends pointed out to me what seems so obvious... at the end of the gospel there will also be 3 days of despair. Jesus is gone, dead even, and his friends who love him cannot find him.

And, the story revolves around Jesus. From the time that he is named, the people around him are referred to in their relationship to Jesus. His parents are not even named in this story, they are only named as 'his parents'. The story is about Jesus. But it also reminds us that we all have our own identities in how we are connected to Jesus. And one day 'every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' (Philippians 2)

There is the theme of teaching at the temple...

The boy Jesus, so at home in the temple, will return to Jerusalem and he will teach in the temple again.

The boy Jesus who comes with his family to Jerusalem during the Passover will come to Jerusalem for the Passover at the end of the gospel.

They are at the temple. It is Passover time. Passover was Jesus' New Year.

Exodus 12, before the people are led out of Egypt, the Lord gives instructions to Moses and Aaron, "**This month** is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year...." "this is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance". (Exodus 12:2,14)

So the Passover meant New Year.

The New Year for the people of God always started with a celebration of God's great victory, his great rescue from Egypt.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "for all the years ahead of you, start the year by remembering that when all hope was gone and you were completely under the grip of powerful Egypt, I brought you out to freedom and into your own safe country". "I love you, I will be with you. After all, I brought you out of Egypt."

The people of Israel start each year remembering, "**we are not in Egypt**, the Lord loves us!".

By telling us this story of this Passover, Luke says, "in Jesus a new Exodus is taking place". In Jesus, God is at work to bring us out of a bondage that is deeper and stronger than the power of one country enslaving another one. In Jesus, God has come to break the power of sin and death in my heart and your heart and everywhere in all of creation. He has come to lead us out of that slavery to freedom.

When Jesus returns to the temple for the Passover, he will offer himself as the Passover lamb for our freedom.

Life being what it is, every year has great and wonderful surprises and also pain and hardship. 2009 has not been any different. Nor has the decade just behind us. 2010 will be wonderful and difficult. It will be funny and scary. It will be full of grace and there will be suffering. But all the way and in every day we will be following the Lord, Jesus the Christ who loves us and who gave his life to set us free.

The risen Jesus, our rescuing hero speaks to you and me today.

Through Peter: 'In this year remember that "... you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Through Paul: When you encounter trouble, "... my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain". (1 Corinthians 15:58)

The Lord be gracious to you.

The Lord be gracious to me. And all God's people said, Amen.