

**Christmas 1 30th December 2018 First recorded words of Jesus
Luke 2:41-52**

Intro

The scenario in today's gospel reading is familiar to many of us whether we be the parents or the child being 'lost'

Every parent's worst nightmare

Tell story of Sarah and Tim when they took the children to Disney World...

The Story

3 times every year Jesus' parents, and many like them, would travel to Jerusalem for the 3 major festivals of the Jewish Faith (Deut 16:16)

- Feast of Unleavened Bread & Passover Exodus 12:1-20 March/April
- Feast of Weeks Leviticus 23:15-21 50 days after Passover at end of grain harvest (Pentecost)
- Feast of Tabernacles Leviticus 23:33-43 Sept/ Oct 7 day feast to celebrate end of fruit harvest (grapes and olives)

Groups of people, who knew each other, probably from the same community, would travel together in a 'caravan', his extended family

Women and children at the front and men at the back

Safer to travel in a group than on your own, protection from robbers along the Palestine roads

For Mary, Joseph, Jesus and those they travelled with it was about 65 miles south from their home town of Nazareth to Jerusalem

We know that this year Jesus was 12 years old

In the Bible 12 is the number of perfection - 12 tribes of Israel 12 disciples

Being 12 Jesus was almost an adult, close to his Bar-Mitzvah - the Jewish coming of age ritual for boys

The festival would have been in and around the temple in Jerusalem

This was a place renowned for learning and at this festival time the great and learned teachers - rabbis - of the day would have assembled to discuss and learn together

They would have been the top scholars... and they were AMAZED at the understanding of Jesus

I'd like us to focus on 2 things from the story in Luke today

Firstly - Mary and Joseph left Jesus behind in Jerusalem

Remember that Mary & Joseph did not travel alone

They were part of a large group who travelled together

The women and children walked ahead in the front of the group and the men brought up the rear
Being 12 and almost thought of as an adult Jesus could have gone in the front or joined the men at the back of the group

Whatever... the group set off back to Nazareth

But Jesus stayed behind in the temple - come back to that later
Maybe Mary assumed that He was with Joseph?
Maybe Joseph assumed that He was with Mary?
As they left all the activity and celebrations of the festival, heading back to their everyday lives, they assumed that the other one had Jesus.
it wasn't until maybe that evening as maybe they gathered together for the night, that they realised that Jesus was not with them

I wonder if we are like that sometimes?

Do we sometimes come together for worship and celebrations... many of us have been in church this last week, at least once, for the celebration of Christmas - Jesus birth day
And then we have left the church, left the company of one another, our praise and worship has ended
And maybe we, in our hearts and minds and spirit 'left Jesus in the building' ?

Do we come on a Sunday or a Tuesday or whichever day it is we come and worship here
And then leave Jesus behind as we return to our homes, work places, social activities?

It could be that Mary and Joseph each assumed that the other was taking responsibility for Jesus
Maybe we sometimes rely on others to take responsibility for Jesus rather than us taking responsibility for Him ourselves

The encouraging thing is that once they realised He was not with them they returned to Jerusalem and searched for Him
It took them 3 days but they found Him
They must have been desperate
3 minutes can seem like a life time if you loose a young child
3 hours can seem like an eternity
But 3 days !!!
Not able to find their son... the Son of God who they had been entrusted with!
But they found Him. Maybe they went back to where they had last seem Him?

At the start of 2019 do we need to make a resolution to purposely seek out Jesus once again
Maybe return to some of the spiritual disciplines that we once took more seriously and seek Him out
Do we need to consciously follow Jesus out of the doors when we leave church and not walk away and leave Him behind?
Do we need to pray that we will learn to notice Him more?
Do we need to take time each day to look for Him and make sure that we seek to stay in His presence rather than leave Him behind here to 'hook up with' next time we come back to church?

Learning to walk with Him, to follow His footsteps, to go where He goes and not assume that He is following us, is an exciting journey to take
He promises to be with us, never to leave nor forsake us
But we need to ensure that we do not walk away from Him and leave Him behind.

Second thing I want us to consider is that Jesus words to Mary when she asked Him why he had not gone with them on the journey.

Did you not know that I must be in my Father's House?

When Mary & Joseph found Jesus their relief must have been immense.

She asks Him why they treated them like that - an interesting question. Maybe time to ponder that another day

But look at Jesus' response... Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's House? vs. 49

Interestingly the other time that Jesus uses this phrase is in John 2:16 when he goes to the temple and accuses the money lenders of turning 'His Father's house' in to a market and he overturned the tables

These are the first recorded words of Jesus. Very little is written of Jesus' life between the ages of birth and 30 except for this account.

The first words He is recorded as saying are crucial

They are central to everything that He would go on to do

He is not being dis-respectful to Mary & Joseph

vs 51 goes on to tell us that He returned home with them and was obedient to them

But Jesus, here in Luke 2:49, is declaring that He must be in His Father's House

He is telling them that God is His Father and that He must be about His Father's business

As we read through Luke's gospel we see other imperatives that Jesus has - here are some of them...

Chapter 4:43 I MUST preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to other towns also

The people looked for him and wanted Him not to leave them but stay

Jesus knew He MUST go and preach elsewhere because that is why He was sent

Chapter 9:22 Jesus said 'The Son of Man MUST suffer many things and...be killed and be raised to life

Jesus knew what He must go through

Chapter 19:5 After looking up in the tree He told Zacchaeus I MUST stay at your house today

Jesus did not shy away from spending time with people who others thought He should avoid

Jesus had deliberately stayed in the temple with the rabbis, to learn and discuss with them because He knew His calling and mission

Mary and Joseph did not fully understand what His mission would look like but Jesus knew and His first recorded words remind us of His identity and His purpose for being here on earth

He was the Son of God and He was here on earth to do the will of His Father

Jesus determined to do these things

At the centre of all His words written in Luke's gospel is His relationship with The Father

His motivation, His *raison d'être* was His love of The Father

Is that something that we seek to emulate?

Is our motivation for life, the purpose of all that we do and say, motivated by our love for our heavenly Father?

I don't know about you but these are 2 HUGE challenges for me !

How conscious am I of not walking away from Jesus, assuming that someone else will take responsibility for keeping Him close? Do I mentally and spiritually leave Him in the building once our times of collective worship are over?

Or do I seek Him out, consciously look for Him and keep my eye on Him, seeking to notice His whereabouts more often so that I can join Him and not expect Him to do the following.... !!!

And is my motivation for life to be in relationship with and to do the will of my Heavenly Father?

I don't usually make New Years resolutions but I am going to spend some time thinking and praying, either later today or tomorrow to see what I might do in 2019 in order to more deliberately keep Jesus in my sight and to stay motivated by living in response to God's unconditional love for me.

And I would encourage all of you to do the same.

And then, like Jesus, maybe we too will increase in wisdom and stature, in divine and human favour!