

LUKE 2:41-52

<sup>41</sup> Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. <sup>43</sup> After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. <sup>44</sup> Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup> When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup> When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." <sup>49</sup> "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" <sup>50</sup> But they did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>51</sup> Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup> And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and people.

A LITTLE GIRL AND HER GRANDMOTHER WERE LOOKING AT A LIFE-SIZE NATIVITY SCENE OUTSIDE A LOCAL CHURCH.

THE WOMAN COMMENTED ON HOW BEAUTIFUL THE FIGURES WERE, AND THE YOUNG GIRL AGREED, BUT THEN ADDED:

"THERE IS ONE THING THAT BOTHERS ME. ISN'T BABY JESUS EVER GOING TO GROW UP? HE IS THE SAME SIZE THIS YEAR AS HE WAS LAST YEAR."

THIS INDEED IS THE PROBLEM FOR MANY PEOPLE, THEY LOSE JESUS BETWEEN ONE CHRISTMAS AND THE NEXT, IN THE SENSE THAT ALL THEY KNOW ABOUT HIM IS- AS THE BABY IN THE MANGER.

TRUE, THEY MAY FIND HIM AGAIN EACH YEAR AND KNOW HIM IN THE CAROLS THEY SING, AND THROUGH SCRIPTURE READINGS DURING A CHRISTMAS EVE OR DAY SERVICE.

BUT THEN THEY MOVE ON WITH LIFE LEAVING HIM BEHIND UNTIL THE FOLLOWING DECEMBER.

THIS IS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER AND BE MESSANGERS OF THE NEWS THAT CHRISTMAS ISN'T OVER.

BY THAT STATEMENT I DON'T SIMPLY MEAN THE CHURCH CELEBRATES THE CHRISTMAS SEASON THROUGH EPIPHANY ON JANUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>.

INSTEAD, WHAT IS MEANT BY THE STATEMENT THAT CHRISTMAS ISN'T OVER IS- THAT THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION AND BIRTH WE CELEBRATE ON CHRISTMAS, IS ONGOING.

IT CONTINUES BECAUSE BABY JESUS, IN FACT, DID GROW UP. AND IT IS BECAUSE HE GREW UP TO DIE ON THE CROSS AND BE RAISED TO LIFE AGAIN-THAT WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

INDEED, WITHOUT GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER THERE WOULD NOT BE CHRISTMAS-BECAUSE THE WORLD WOULD NOT HAVE A SAVIOR.

PERHAPS SOME OF THE PROBLEM PEOPLE HAVE IS THAT THE BIBLE, FOR THE MOST PART, JUMPS FROM JESUS' BIRTH TO HIS APPEARANCE AS AN ADULT TO BE BAPTIZED BY JOHN.

YES, BOTH MATTHEW AND LUKE MAKE MENTION OF EVENTS THAT HAPPEN WHILE JESUS IS STILL VERY YOUNG.

BUT FOR THE MOST PART, THE GOSPELS LEAP FROM HIS INFANCY OVER CHILDHOOD TO JESUS AS AN ADULT.

ONLY THE GOSPEL OF LUKE CONTAINS ONE BRIEF STORY THAT MENTIONS JESUS WAS AN OLDER CHILD.

THEREFORE, IT CAN BE EASY FOR US TO OVERLOOK HIS YEARS AS A CHILD AND YOUTH. AND YET IT IS ALSO HELPFUL FOR US TO REMEMBER HIM IN THOSE WAYS

THE VALUE OF TODAY'S STORY IS FIRST AND FOREMOST IT REMINDS US BABY JESUS LIVED A REAL LIFE, GROWING UP IN THE USUAL WAY IN THAT TIME AND CULTURE.

BY REMEMBERING THE ONE GLIMPSE WE HAVE OF JESUS AS A BOY WE ARE ALSO REMINDED THE RESULTS OF CHRISTMAS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.

HERE WE ARE SHOWN JESUS GREW FROM AN INFANT TO A CHILD TO AN ADULT, JUST LIKE HUMAN BEINGS ARE SUPPOSED TO.

THIS REMINDS US THAT JESUS INDEED WAS ACTUALLY HUMAN AND DID NOT JUST APPEAR TO BE SO, LIKE STORIES IN PAGAN MYTHS.

YES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER NOT ONLY WAS JESUS BORN, HE ALSO GREW UP.

THIS FACT DEFIES OUR ATTEMPTS TO PACK JESUS AWAY UNTIL NEXT YEAR'S CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS, AND THUS LEAVE HIM BEHIND FOR THE NEXT ELEVEN MONTHS.

AND SO, TURNING TO THE GOSPEL TEXT LET US LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT LUKE'S GIFT TO THE CHURCH AND TO US.

WE LEARN FROM THIS PASSAGE, AS WELL AS FROM OTHERS, THAT JOSEPH AND MARY WERE PIOUS JEWS WHO RAISED JESUS ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF MOSES.

WE ARE TOLD THEY TOOK HIM TO CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER IN JERUSALEM WHEN HIS WAS TWELVE.

THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN THE YEAR HE WAS ON THE BRINK OF BEING ABLE TO JOIN THE SYNAGOGUE AS AN FULL MEMBER, WHICH USUALLY HAPPENED AT AGE 13.

THAT YEAR'S JOURNEY WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IN THE USUAL WAY. PEOPLE MOST OFTEN TRAVELED TO THE HOLY CITY AND BACK IN LARGE GROUPS.

WE MAY IMAGINE MANY FAMILIES FROM NAZARETH TRAVELED TOGETHER. THE MEN USUALLY OUT PACED THE WOMEN AND WOULD BEGIN TO SET UP CAMP WHEN IT WAS TIME TO STOP.

CHILDREN WOULD TRAVEL WITH THE WOMEN AT A SLOWER PACE, UNTIL THE BOYS REACHED A CERTAIN AGE.

CONSEQUENTLY, ON THE WAY HOME, IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN OUT OF PLACE FOR EITHER JOSEPH OR MARY TO FAIL TO REALIZE JESUS WAS NOT WITH THE GROUP.

SURELY THE ADULTS WERE DISTRACTED WITH THE LOGISTICS OF THE JOURNEY HOME, MAKING THEIR WAY AMONGST THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ALSO LEAVING THE CITY.

SO, EACH MUST HAVE ASSUMED JESUS WAS WITH THE OTHER ONE, UNTIL OF COURSE THE FAMILY GROUPS CAME TOGETHER WHEN THEY STOPPED EACH NIGHT.

ANYONE WHO HAS EVEN, FOR A FEW MINUTES, LOST TRACK OF A CHILD KNOWS THE ANXIETY MARY AND JOSEPH FELT.

THEY HAD TRAVELED A DAY FROM THE CITY AND NOW HAD TO TRAVEL ANOTHER DAY BACK AND THEN SEARCH FOR HIM.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THEY WERE BOTH RELIEVED AND UPSET WHEN THEY FOUND HIM SAFE AND SOUND IN THE TEMPLE.

FOR WHILE JESUS MIGHT OF SEEN HIMSELF AS GROWN UP ENOUGH TO ASSUME SOME ADULT RESPONSIBILITIES, MARY AND JOSEPH STILL SAW HIM AS A CHILD WHO NEEDLESSLY WORRIED THEM.

BUT THERE HE WAS IN THE TEMPLE, SPEAKING WITH THE RELIGIOUS TEACHERS WITH A DEPTH OF UNDERSTANDING SURPRISING IN A BOY HIS AGE, EVEN ONE RAISED IN THE FAITH.

THUS, IT SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING THAT WHILE HIS PARENTS WERE DISTRESSED, THE YOUTHFUL JESUS WAS NOT, AFTER ALL HE KNEW HE WAS PERFECTLY SAFE.

THIS IS NOT UNLIKE YOUTH WHO THROUGH THE AGES ARE SURPRISED AT THE WORRY OF THEIR PARENTS WHEN THEY BEGIN TO ASSERT SOME INDEPENDENCE.

WE ARE TOLD THAT AFTER WONDERING WHY HIS PARENTS WERE DISTRESSED, JESUS REALIZES THEY SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HE WAS IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE, MEANING DOING HIS FATHER'S WORK.

HIS REPLY TO HIS MOTHER: "DIDN'T YOU KNOW I HAD TO BE IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE? -WAS HIS WAY OF SAYING HE KNEW HIS DUTY TO GOD CAME FIRST.

HERE WE HAVE A GLIMPSE OF JESUS' GROWING AWARENESS OF HIS IDENTITY AS THE SON OF GOD.

IT IS A SIGNIFICANT MOMENT OF GROWTH FOR JESUS. HE HEARD THE CALL OF HIS FATHER AND CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S WILL FOR HIS LIFE.

THE INTERPRETATION COMMENTARY EXPLAINS THIS CHANGE IN JESUS AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PARENTS, SAYING:

"JESUS NOW CLAIMS FOR HIMSELF HIS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD..."

UP TO THIS POINT ALL SIGNS ABOUT JESUS, HIS MISSION AND UNIQUENESS CAME FROM OTHERS...."

IN OTHER WORDS, THE GOSPEL TELLS US WHAT THE ANGELS, SHEPHERDS, WISEMEN, AND OTHERS THOUGHT ABOUT JESUS AND WHO HE IS. BUT NOW JESUS SPEAKS FOR HIMSELF.

IN FACT, HIS RESPONSE TO HIS MOTHER WAS THE FIRST WORD JESUS SPEAKS IN THE BIBLE.

WHAT IS ALSO NOTABLE ABOUT THIS IS THAT AFTER MAKING THAT STATEMENT, JESUS WAS OBEDIENT TO HIS PARENTS AND IMMEDIATELY LEFT WITH THEM.

THE PASSAGE ALSO SAYS THAT JESUS RETURNED HOME WITH THEM AND CONTINUED TO GROW IN ALL THE NORMAL WAYS, AS WELL AS IN SPIRITUAL AWARENESS AND WISDOM.

GROWTH IN STATUE IMPLIES IN BODY AND MIND, FAVOR WITH GOD RELATES TO SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT, AND FAVOR WITH PEOPLE MEANS GROWTH SOCIALLY.

AGAIN, WE ARE REMINDED THAT JESUS DID NOT STAY IN THE MANGER, AND IF WE REALLY WISH TO FIND HIM, WE NEED TO REMEMBER THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTMAS IS ONGOING.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN WE ARE SUPPOSE TO BE REMAIN IN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON.

INSTEAD, THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS REMAINS IN US, WE NEED ONLY TO BE AWARE OF THIS.

THIS STORY ALSO OFFERS US A MESSAGE THAT CAN BE HELPFUL IN OUR OWN LIVES IN OTHER WAYS.

IT TELLS US THAT JESUS RETURNED HOME SO HE COULD CONTINUE TO GROW, AS WAS NECESSARY, IN ORDER FOR HIM TO FULFILL THE PURPOSE OF HIS BIRTH.

WHAT A WONDERFUL MESSAGE TO BE REMINDED ABOUT BY THIS STORY IN LUKE, WHICH MOVES US FROM CHRIST'S BIRTH INTO HIS GROWING YEARS OF ORDINARY LIFE.

IT IS A BLESSING AND A HELP TO KNOW, THAT EVEN JESUS HAD TO WAIT FOR HIS FATHER'S TIMING.

THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES IN LIFE SEEM TO HOLD US BACK, OR THE TIME IS NOT YET RIGHT FOR SOMETHING WE WANT TO HAPPEN.

YES, EVEN AFTER JESUS, BECAME AWARE OF HIS IDENTITY AS GOD'S WORD MADE FLESH, HE HAD TO WAIT, HE HAD TO GROW SOME BEFORE HE COULD DO WHAT HE CAME TO EARTH TO DO.

THIS REMINDS US THAT SOMETIMES WE MAY BE CALLED BY GOD TO A TASK, AND MAY BE ANXIOUS TO GET ON WITH IT.

BUT HEARING THE CALL AND BEING AWARE OF GOD'S WILL DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO IT AT THAT MOMENT.

THERE ARE TIMES GOD GIVES US AN IDEA OF WHAT HE DESIRES FROM US, BUT WE NEED TO GROW INTO IT, WE NEED TO BE EQUIPPED BEFORE WE CAN ACT.

ANOTHER HELPFUL REMINDER IN TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY IS THAT MARY AND JOSEPH CAN BE MODELS FOR US.

FOR WHILE JESUS WAS BOTH DIVINE AND HUMAN, THEY, LIKE US, WERE NOT.

YES, MARY WAS THE MOST BLESSED AMONG WOMEN, BUT SHE WAS STILL HUMAN AND AS FALLABLE AS THE REST OF US.

NEITHER SHE NOR JOSEPH KNEW OR UNDERSTOOD MUCH OF WHAT GOD WAS DOING THROUGH THEM OR JESUS.

THIS IS NOT SO DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF US, WITHIN WHOM GOD IS WORKING IN WAYS BEYOND OUR AWARENESS OR COMPREHENSION.

FINALLY, WE ALSO CAN LEARN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE OF LEAVING JESUS BEHIND.

WE TOO ARE MOVING OUT OF THE HOLY DAYS OF THE SEASON BACK TO OUR "NORMAL" LIVES AND TASKS.

AND AS WE DO SO, LET US REMEMBER NOT TO LEAVE JESUS BEHIND US WHEN WE MOVE ON INTO THE NEW YEAR.

INDEED, HE IS BORN IN THE WORLD AND WITHIN US- SO THAT HE MAY BE WITH US ALWAYS.

SO LET US NOT LEAVE HIM BEHIND, EITHER IN THE MANGER OR OUTSIDE OF THE EMPTY TOMB.

IN OTHER WORDS, JESUS IS WITH US IN THE ORDINARY DAYS OF LIFE, AND NOT JUST ON SUNDAY'S OR DURING THE SPECIAL HOLY DAYS OF ADVENT, CHRISTMAS, EPHIPHANY, LENT, AND EASTER.

CONSEQUENTLY, WHEN WE THINK WE HAVE LOST JESUS, AS CHRISTIANS, THE FIRST PLACE WE NEED TO LOOK IS WITHIN.

AND THIS THOUGHT BRINGS US BACK TO CHRISTMAS AND A REMINDER THAT WHILE THE CELEBRATION FOR MOST OF US MAY BE OVER-THE REALITY OF CHRISTMAS IS NOT.

THE MESSAGE SPOKEN BY ISAIAH IS NOW A CALL FOR ALL CHRISTIANS: "...ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH SHALL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD."

WE NOW ARE THE MESSANGERS GOD SENDS INTO THE WORLD TO TRY TO PREVENT THE WORLD FROM LOSING SIGHT OF JESUS UNTIL NEXT YEAR.

THE SAYING ON AN OLD CHRISTMAS CARD EXPLAINS THE ONGOING PRESENCE OF CHRISTMAS THIS WAY:

"WHEN THE SONG OF THE ANGELS IS STILLED, WHEN THE STAR IN THE SKY IS GONE,

WHEN THE KINGS AND THE PRINCES ARE HOME, WHEN THE SHEPHERDS ARE BACK WITH THEIR FLOCKS, THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS BEGINS:

TO FIND THE LOST, TO HEAL THE BROKEN, TO FEED THE HUNGRY, TO RELEASE THE PRISONER,

TO REBUILD THE NATIONS, TO BRING PEACE AMONG PEOPLE, TO MAKE MUSIC IN THE HEARTS.

TOGETHER, LET US BEGIN THE WORK TO WHICH THE MIRACLE OF CHRIST'S COMING CALLS US." AMEN

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WE ARE ALSO REMINDED THE RESULTS OF CHRISTMAS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS. HERE WAS ARE TOLD JESUS GREW FROM AN INFANT TO A CHILD TO AN ADULT, JUST LIKE HUMAN BEINGS ARE SUPPOSED TO. YES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER NOT ONLY WAS JESUS BORN HE ALSO GREW UP.

TODAY'S STORY ABOUT JESUS IN THE TEMPLE IS IMPORTANT FOR SEVERAL REASONS. HIS REPLY TO HIS MOTHER: "DIDN'T YOU KNOW I HAD TO BE IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE? -WAS HIS WAY OF SAYING HE KNEW HIS DUTY TO GOD CAME FIRST.

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