



They Met Jesus in the Temple

Luke 2:41-51

I have always loved the story of Jesus visiting the Temple as a twelve-year-old boy. At Passover, more than one million people visited Jerusalem, a city of approximately 100,000 residents. The male and female pilgrims traveled in separate groups during the day, with families reuniting each night.

In crowded Jerusalem, Jesus gets separated from his parents. When it is time to go home, both parents assume that Jesus is with the other parent. Joseph assumes Jesus is with his mother and the other children. Since a 13-year-old was considered an adult, Mary may think that Jesus has chosen to travel with “the men.”

That evening, Joseph and Mary discover that Jesus is missing. After checking with relatives and friends, they travel back to Jerusalem and locate him - three days later! Jesus is sitting in the Temple, listening to the rabbis, asking questions, and even joining in the discussion. “All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” They saw something special in this 12-year-old boy.

Mary asks, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” How could you do this to us?! When I imagine my son being lost for three days because he “forgot” to come home, I can understand Mary’s frustration!

Jesus answers calmly, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” His answer shows both his deity (he knows that the Temple is “my Father’s house”) and his humanity (he has the absent-minded enthusiasm of a kid visiting the big city).

He is the Son of God, but he is also a 12-year-old who is so excited by his surroundings that he forgets when it is time to go home.

Fast-forward twenty years. Jesus, surrounded by a ragtag group of disciples, is again visiting the Temple. During this visit to Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders will arrest and crucify Jesus the Messiah.

Do any of these leaders remember Jesus from his childhood visit? I suspect that at least a few of them thought, “There was something special about Jesus even as a child. Are we making a terrible mistake?”

A few days later, these priests saw the Temple veil torn in two when Jesus died (Matt 27:51). They watched the efforts of the Temple officials to hide the truth of the Resurrection. They knew that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Jump ahead another few months. The apostles are preaching the message of salvation through faith in a risen Christ. Although most of the Jewish leaders reject this message, “a great many of the priests” believed (Acts 6:7).

Do you see the incredible faithfulness of a God who lovingly pursues lost mankind? A seed is planted when Jesus visits the temple as a 12-year-old. The seed is watered by his teaching in the Temple. As Peter preaches that “this Jesus whom you crucified is the Messiah,” the seed takes root.

If you are praying for an unsaved family member or friend, don't lose hope. It may take decades for the seeds of your tears, prayers, and faithful example to take root. But don't give up. God is a faithful God who goes “after the one that is lost, until he finds it” (Lk 15:4).