

1st Sunday after Epiphany (8 January 2017)

Sermon Text: Luke 2:41-52

Sermon Theme: Turning to God, our Father

I want to read v46-50 and v52 again:

After three days, they found 12 year old Jesus in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.

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."

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

May our Lord and Savior through the power of the Holy Spirit bless these words. Amen

Please be seated

This text in Luke is the only text we have in the Bible that tells us a bit about Jesus when he was growing up. But wow, what a text. Today I want to do three things:

1. Try to imagine what happened about 2000 years ago in Jerusalem.
2. Seven observations relating to the text.
3. Finally, how can the text relate to us in 2017.

Firstly, reading the text, it seems to me like a camping trip that families and friends take, especially this time of year. Many kids and grownups go to their favorite camping spot. Sometimes the children swop cars to travel with their

friends. If it is a long trip, all the families will stop along the way to have a picnic or a burger. They celebrate and have fun and the mood is festive. Once the families get to the camp site, the kids play, explore and do their own thing. The parents keep a casual eye where the children are. But essentially, the parents relax and enjoy themselves. A family holiday.

About 2000 years ago, Joseph, Mary, Jesus and many families also travelled from Nazareth to Jerusalem with family and friends. It took seven days by foot. But it was a festive atmosphere, with the men walking together talking about “man” things, the women walking together and the children playing as they went along. Because it was a long trip, only children older than 12 came along. Thus, it was the first time Jesus was part of this pilgrimage to Jerusalem. From the text, it seems that Jesus was like a normal 12 year boy playing with his mates and enjoying the journey. Once the families got to Jerusalem, the parents arranged what was needed for the Passover festival. They went to temple as was custom and celebrated Passover according to tradition. A family holiday. All 100% ordinary.

But, then Jesus, this 12 year old boy, took a decision that was extraordinary.

In the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the centre of the Jewish faith, Jesus went to the teachers and doctors of the Law, asked them questions and listened to them. He must have asked them deep and insightful questions about God, the Law and Holy Scriptures. **But He was not only questioning; He was also answering their questions. The text says: Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.** It was something special in this young boy!

And it was not for 5 or 10 minutes. For 3 days, Jesus engaged with these scholars and experts of the Word of God. Jesus did not tell his parents where he was. He made the decision to spend time in the temple with the scholars

and experts of Scriptures. For anyone else, we may say it was a life changing decision.

So Secondly, what observations can we derive from this text?

- 1) Was it not “wrong” of Jesus to let his parents worry by not telling them where he was for three days? Can we say that Jesus was growing up and started to claim his independence from his parents, a painful process all parents go through? In Mathew 10v37 we read the challenging text where Jesus says: “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me”. I think that we can conclude that for Jesus, God the Father came first, even at the age of 12.
- 2) The word **Father** took on a new significance. Mary confronts Jesus how worried his **father Joseph** was. Jesus responds that I must be in my **Father’s** house. Jesus related to his spiritual Father in heaven. It highlights what we deal with every day, namely that we live and act in this world, but at the same time we live and believe in a spiritual dimension.
- 3) Jesus was learning by listening and asking questions and applying his young mind. He was not born with all the answers. His understanding grew. In v52, we read “Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God”. It reminds me of Mathew 22v38 “Jesus declared, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all **your mind.**’
- 4) The institution of Holy Communion at the last supper was also at the Passover festival. There are important parallels between the Passover festival of the Old Testament and Holy Communion. The Passover is a celebration for the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt after the 10 plagues. The Jews put the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the door post so that the **Angel** of the Lord would **pass-over** them when all the **Egyptians** first born died in the final plague. Jesus said in Luke 22v20 “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” The blood of the sacrificed lamb in the Pass-Over became the blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which became the new covenant for our salvation.

- 5) Jesus announced to his family (and the world) that the temple is his Father's house.
In Luke 19v46, Jesus says "My house will be a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of robbers." Let us always remember that the Lord's house is a holy place.
- 6) These are the first words of Jesus recorded in this Gospel "...I must be in my Father's house". Being in the temple, listening to God's Word, is where Jesus spiritual journey started. We have the opportunity to bring our children **to the Service and to** Sunday school, so that like Jesus, they can also listen to God's word.
- 7) The "relationship" with the Jewish teachers started here. The conclusion of the relationship ended with Jesus trial and crucifixion. The Jews were unable to accept Jesus as the Son of God.

Now Finally, How can this text relate to us?

Maybe like Mary and Joseph, we are getting along with life just fine. We attend church regularly and are active members of our congregation. We share special events like the birth of our Lord Jesus at Christmas with family and friends.

Then something happens where we have an opportunity to ask questions, to learn, to listen, to grow in faith and understanding. Maybe our family and friends do not understand our decision and why we do what we do. But, our spiritual well-being takes priority.

May I share a personal experience and tell you that Wednesday evening Bible study is such an opportunity for me. To listen and ask questions and share this special fellowship with Pastor Walter and you is a privilege. My squash buddies probably think I am mad because Wednesday night is league night. Not anymore.

Like the 12 year old boy Jesus, let us also look for opportunities to turn to God, to listen and ask questions to strengthen our faith. Attending Holy Sunday Service (in German Gottesdienst), taking part in Bible Study and bringing our children to Sunday school, lets us do just that. Like the 12 year old boy Jesus, let us also turn to God, our Father, who is in heaven.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen

Axel Pape, St. Thomas, Cape Town, 8th January 2017