

Luke 2v41-52 Sermon - Wisdom and stature

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents[] saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' 49 He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'[m] 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years,[n] and in divine and human favour.

Introduction.

The world needs grownups. Now more than ever, in a time when at a national level our leaders seem to be acting like children, creating division, playing on self interest, telling lies. And on a local level too in the face of fragmenting communities and violence our streets we need role models and wise voices.

Our passage is an insight into how Jesus grew up and what it might look like to grow up in his image. Note *v51 His mother treasured all these things in her heart.* It is another hint that Mary is the source of this account.

It is passover time and the whole community travels to Jerusalem to celebrate. The village would travel together and there is a festival atmosphere. You can imagine how much fun it would have been for children.

And when it was finished, they set off to return home. Mary and Joseph notice that Jesus is not with them, but they assume he was with his friends from another family. It is only that evening when they stopped travelling that an increasingly panicked Mary and Joseph realise that Jesus is not with the group at all. They rush back to Jerusalem and spend three days looking for him. It didn't cross their mind to check in the temple - not really where 12 year old boys are expected to hang out. But eventually there he is, sitting among the rabbis, listening to them and asking them questions. And the rabbis response is "*Who is this boy?*"

Some Observations

v44 Gives an insight into the close knit community that Jesus grow up in. *Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.* There is something lovely about that, but also remember it would have been a conservative rural farming community, with little education and few aspirations. And Jesus is respectful of but not limited by that. It was a world where people were defined class or family or background. And sedate everything we are not that different. Bit one of the wonderful things about Christianity is that you need not be limited by where you come from. Christianity is it is genuinely open to anyone and it gives you opportunity to transcend your background. *That was true of Jesus and it is true of you.*

John Wesley complained about working class methodists learning to read, becoming careful with their money and living in their means and within a generation becoming middle class. We don't leave one subculture to join another.

Jesus identity before God is more important than his family identity

v49 He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'[m]

There is a lovely innocence here - "*where else would I be?*". But if Jesus is in his fathers house then how much more should you be. And church is not mine or yours - it is your fathers house. Of course Jesus know better than anywhere that God is not limited by buildings. But these sacred places are where the people of God are gathered and taught and grow to maturity.

Nevertheless he treats his family with great respect v51 "*Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.*"

Like Jesus, Can you hold these two things together - liberated by the Gospel to be all that God is calling you to, set free from the constraints of society and expectation and yet choose to respect your family and your background.

Next - Look at how Jesus learned

It's really important to remember that Jesus didn't have any special privileges. He learned the ordinary way just like you and me. v46 "*sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.*" I love this Jewish didactic model - Christianity has got itself quite defensive about questions - but questions are not a threat, they are how we learn.

Lovely story about a woman who converted to Christianity from Judaism, and she loved the freedom and joy of Christianity, and sense of intimacy with God. But really missed this approach to teaching, sitting around in the synagogue having a really good discussion or even argument, without the consequence being someone getting excluded. You can't say 'you're not Jewish' because you get your theology wrong, but we fear that people will say 'you're not a real Christian' So ask good questions to people you trust. I'd love to have ongoing conversations with any of you. Don't not ask because you think I would think less of you because you are asking honest questions.

And that leads to the theme of Wisdom and stature

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years,[n] and in divine and human favour. Our Bible translates that word 'years' literally, but in the context it means stature or character.

Wisdom is knowledge that is rooted, earthed, applied. Knowledge is an amazing thing, but wisdom is about how we live well, how we grow as people, how we come to maturity.

Stature or Character is the ability to silence our ego and hold discomfort. Children shout the roof down when they get hurt. Maturity of character means to hold discomfort and respond appropriately, to think of others first and to hold to the truth even when it is difficult.

And all this matters a great deal. The world needs grownups, people of wisdom and stature. As Paul says what we are doing here at church is teaching and challenging each other "*until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, as we mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ.*" Ephesians 4

So that is the goal. How are you growing in your faith? Where do you need to be challenged so that you *mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ.* How are you growing in wisdom and stature?