

Growing in knowing about God and in Knowing him

Reading: Luke 2:41-52

This incident is the only one about Jesus' childhood, the only thing we know about his childhood, and only Luke records it. You might like to wonder why he chooses to include it in his gospel.

Apparently, Jewish males, both men and boys, were supposed to go to the temple three times each year, so that's why there's a big group of them gone up to Jerusalem from Nazareth, enough people for Joseph and Mary to lose Jesus in. Probably each thinks that Jesus is with the other parent, and, of course, they may well have other children to look after as well as Jesus. They suffer that panic and guilt that any parent feels when they can't find their child - Kathy and I have certainly had that - but they find him safe and well in the temple.

We need first to think about Jesus' reply to his parents. These are Jesus' first words in Luke's gospel, and doesn't he sound pompous and self-righteous! Is this a case of an adolescent turning his parents' anxiety back on them, with typical teenage astuteness, counter-attacking rather than apologising? And isn't he being disobedient and inconsiderate by letting his family leave without him?

Well, unlikely. Luke makes a point of saying how obedient Jesus is after this and that he grows in favour with God and men. And surely Mary will have told Jesus about his miraculous birth and whose son he really is, so quite likely Jesus is saying, "You've told me that I am God's Son, so of course I am wanting to find out more about Him." We do have to balance some passages with other ones in the Bible, and not jump to quick conclusions that Jesus was a

rebellious teenager.

More interesting is why Jesus wants to be in the temple. We are told that he is listening and asking questions. He isn't telling them things much, although we are told that they are amazed at his answers. But mostly he is wanting to find out things. We tend to assume that Jesus has a hot-line to God and knows everything about himself and God's plans for him. But we may well be wrong about that because if that were the case, why does Jesus need to ask questions and listen? Quite likely Jesus has, like us, to rely on what his parents tell him and on what he learns from study of the scriptures. Only gradually perhaps does he learn of God's plans for him and learn to trust his Father. And we know that there is a struggle near the end of his life, when he wants to back out.

Jesus doesn't just float through life; he has an ordinary childhood and he has to learn about God, just as we have to. We know from this account that this sometimes causes him conflicts and to be misunderstood. Haven't we said things that come out differently from how we intended; haven't we had problems as Christians with conflicting loyalties, or been misunderstood?

But, most importantly, are we, as Jesus did, growing in our knowledge about God, and in our trust in him? Knowledge about God comes through studying the Bible and from questioning, as Jesus does. Maybe this new year we should consider using some Bible reading notes or joining a home group, to encourage us to read the Bible and to apply it to our lives.

And Jesus grows in favour with God because he is obviously applying it to his life. Are we concerned what God thinks about us?

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