

January 5th, 2025

Devotional
"The Boy in the Temple"
Luke 2: 41-52

Monday: "Passover" - Luke 2: 41-42

In Biblical times, there were certain times throughout the year that all in the community who were able would travel to Jerusalem. Often it was for times of high celebration or ceremony, with presentation of offerings within the temple. While there were certainly allowances for those who were unable to make the journey, many did.

We see this here where Jesus is 12 years old and we will see it again during the Holy Week narrative. One of the times when people traveled to Jerusalem was for Passover - the celebration of God's liberation of the Hebrew people from the hands of the Egyptians.

It would have been quite the journey for Mary, Joseph, Jesus and their family. The distance from Nazareth, where they were, to Jerusalem is 90 miles. It takes almost three hours to make that trip by car today. So one can imagine how many days it took, traveling by foot.

Traveling to Jerusalem was a sign of both obedience and an act of worship - no matter how far people had to come from.

How do we demonstrate our obedience to God today?

Prayer: God, we thank you for the example of people through the ages who have made spiritual pilgrimages as a sign of devotion to you. We know that this not the only way to show our obedience and devotion. Make clear to us this week how we can follow you more closely, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday: "Assuming" - Luke 2: 43-44

Keeping in mind all of the chaos of traveling with a large group of people, where innumerable people were gathered in a city together, and the distance people had to travel, it isn't that hard to realize how Jesus's absence went unnoticed for a period of time.

Mary and Joseph would have assumed that he was simply with other family members. Or with friends along the path back to Nazareth. It's not until they went almost a days journey, on foot, before they realized that Jesus was not in the crowds.

I had a camper that went missing once. Even though we had a small group of kids and our ratio of adults to children was small, he was a wander. After looking all sorts of place, I finally found him on the basketball court. Throwing a ball into a hoop on his own, as happy as could be.

I know the sense of relief when I found that camper, and he had not wandered far. I can only imagine the panic that must have filled Mary and Joseph realizing that their son, who is the Messiah, is missing.

How would you react if you were Mary and Joseph?

Prayer: Lord, we can feel the fear and anxiety of Mary and Joseph as they realize that their son is not amongst the crowds. Give us tender hearts towards them, and towards parents and loved ones who have concerns for children here and now, today. Amen.

Wednesday: "Temple" - Luke 2: 45-46

When Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus after searching, they realized that they needed to turn around and head back the direction they came from. I imagine with each step back to Jerusalem, they were wondering where he could be. If he was safe. What had happened.

When they did find him, he was in the temple, surrounded by religious teachers and asking them questions. He was safe!

I would imagine that the temple was not the first place that Mary and Joseph thought to look for Jesus. How many 12 year old boys would be found there, especially in a city as large as Jerusalem? Yet, it was his heart that drew him to that particular place.

Where does your heart draw you, today?

Prayer: Almighty God, we know that you lead each of us by your Spirit. There aren't coincidences, O Lord, so much as opportunities to be where you want us to be. Open up our hearts to respond to your leading, we pray. Amen.

Thursday: "Amazed" - Luke 2: 47-50

When Mary and Joseph find Jesus amongst these teachers, we are first told that he is listening and asking questions. But he is also answering questions in a way that leave the teachers in utter amazement.

When is the last time you were amazed by Christ? Amazed by the leading of the Holy Spirit? Amazed by the love of God?

I know for me, amazement comes at times when I'm reading the Bible in the morning. Or see the sun setting in the evening. When I hear the wisdom of my nieces and nephew. When I celebrate an answer to prayer.

While the teachers were amazed because they couldn't understand how a 12 year old could engage their teachings in this particular way, we are amazed because of the goodness and grace of our God.

When were you last amazed by God?

Prayer: God of Grace, we are amazed by your majesty, goodness, grace, and love. You meet us right where we are at, in the midst of our needs, and speak to our hearts. Thank you, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Friday: "Treasured" - Luke 2: 51-52

Jesus tells his parents that they should have known where to find him, because of course he would be in his Father's house. However, his words did not strike them in a way that they could understand. But Jesus left with them and was obedient.

We are then told that Mary treasured all of these things in her heart. Along with the words of Simeon and Anna. The arrival of the Magi from the East (in the Gospel of Matthew). Mary may not understand all that is happening, but she knows that they are to be kept, like treasure, within her spirit.

A few years ago for Christmas, I bought my dad a memory book where he can write down sayings from the grandkids. Sometimes, it is not until we look back that we realize how profound those words actually are. They are something we treasure.

We do not need to fully understand in order to realize the treasures of God. We simply must be able to perceive and receive.

What is something of God that you consider to be a treasure in your heart?

Prayer: God, you are so good to us. More than we recognize. More than we can understand. Let us treasure the things of you and your Kingdom in our hearts, we pray. Amen.