

Dec 27 2015 Luke 2: 41-end

Well here we are, it's the Sunday after Christmas and I wonder **how you are all feeling**. May be you can look back on a time shared with friends or family and feel it was a time of celebration. May be it wasn't such a great time of year for you and you felt very stressed by it all, or even distressed by it and you are quietly glad it's all over.

Either way, this Sunday could be called '**anticlimax Sunday**'. You could be forgiven for thinking there was all the anticipation of Christmas Day, now it's over and 'what was it all about?'

Here in our Gospel reading today, we have **Mary and Joseph possibly thinking the same thing**. Every year, they go to all the trouble and expense of going to Jerusalem for the high point of the Jewish Year, Passover, doubtless to pay a priest a lot of money to make a sacrifice in the temple, either on their own or jointly with the rest of the party they travelled with. And here they are, on the way home, thinking 'that's it for another year' when they suddenly realise that their oldest son, Jesus, is not with them. Full of anxiety they rush back to Jerusalem and find Jesus in the temple, talking to the teachers and when Mary says 'why didn't you think to tell us where you were', Jesus replies **Do you not know that I must be in my Father's house?**

This could look like a bit of an odd Gospel passage, **what is it really about?** Is it a message about Mary and Joseph and how good parents do a head count before they set off anywhere? Is this a story about Jesus' childhood and what he was like when he was 12? Perhaps it's a story about how Jesus is a bit of a 'super Geek', someone who can sit discoursing with the temple teachers but doesn't think it's helpful to let his parents know where he is?

I don't think this passage is about any of these things. I think Luke wants us to ask the following questions:

- **Who is Jesus**
- **Who is Jesus' family**
- **And what has Jesus come to do for us?**

So, who is Jesus? Don't we know that he is the son of his mother, Mary and father, Joseph the carpenter, descended from the line of David? Doesn't he have brothers, James, Joseph, Simon and Judas and some sisters (who sadly the bible chooses not to name) but we can assume

that he had at least two sisters because they are referred to in the plural, so Jesus is the oldest of at least 7 siblings. Does that tell us who Jesus is? What else does Luke want us to know about him?

Luke ends this passage with a description of Jesus as one who **'grows in wisdom and in divine and human favour'**. This is a quote from 1 Samuel 2:26. The prophet Samuel, as a child, is described as 'continuing to grow both in stature and in favour with the Lord and with the people'. Luke wants us to know that Jesus is not some ordinary child; Jesus is sent by God, just as Samuel was sent by God.

So if this is Jesus, **who is Jesus' family?**

On the one hand, Jesus has ordinary parents, and ordinary brothers and sisters, but on the other hand, when Mary says to Jesus 'didn't you realise that your father and I were worried to death about you', Jesus replies 'don't you know that **I must be in my Father's house**'.

My Father's house is a phrase absolutely packed with meaning.

I am going to paraphrase 2 Samuel 7 for you: The prophet Nathan is having a conversation with King David about building a temple in Jerusalem. Nathan says to David, don't build a temple yet because **the Lord God will make you a house**. This has a double meaning because *God* will build the house, not David, and not only a *physical* house, the temple in Jerusalem, but also *David's offspring* will be house of God.

So God promises David '**I will make you a house**': 'I will raise up offspring after you and one will come who will establish my kingdom forever; **and I will be a father to him and he shall be my son (2 Sam 7:14)**.'

So when Jesus says to Mary **I must be in my Father's house** this is a direct quote from Samuel, to show us that the prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus, who is the promised Son of David.

When Jesus tells us he is in his father's house, **he tells us who he is**, the promised son of David, and **who his family is**: God is his Father, because Jesus is God's Son.

Our Gospel passage also tells us **what Jesus has come to do**. It's a little cameo sketch of everything that is to come. Let me remind you, Luke tells us it is the Passover, Jesus is lost to his family, who search for him with great anxiety, and ***then three days later***, he is found again.

Where have we heard that before?

Luke is telling us that *this child Jesus* is the same person who one day, will go to Jerusalem for a final time, to be lost to us in death, only to be found again, three days later, in the resurrection.

Luke's Gospel even ends with the disciples returning to Jerusalem, with great joy, where they are continually in the temple, praising God.

So who is Jesus, he is the promised Son of David, and who is Jesus' family, God is his Father because Jesus is the Son of God we are Jesus' family because of what Jesus came to do, which was to establish God's house, the Kingdom of God, forever.

So, in this Gospel passage we see a glimpse of Easter and perhaps today is not such an anticlimax after all?

Amen