

The story of Jesus making the trip with his family to Jerusalem for the Passover is the only story in the Gospels of the childhood of Jesus. I think it is an appropriate story for us to use just after Christmas. Much of our planning and work for Christmas is centered around children, especially families with children. Unfortunately, most of our children are home playing with their Christmas toys. Thus, many of them miss this lectionary reading of Jesus as a boy of twelve making the journey with his family to Jerusalem. There are other stories in books that did not make it into the canon of the Bible, but this story is the only childhood story of Jesus in the Bible.

It is a great story. The family makes the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem – and this year it is special because it is the year of Jesus' Bar Mitzvah. He is twelve. And if he has already been through Bar Mitzvah, this would be his first time to fulfill the law of God by making a pilgrimage to the Temple. Three annual pilgrimages were required of all adult males close enough to Jerusalem to make the journey – Passover, Pentecost and Feast of Tabernacles.

Maybe Luke is using this story to present home, temple and synagogue as the formative institutions in the development of Jesus. Jesus is a product of home, temple and synagogue. His family is a model Jewish family at every point.

- Circumcision of Jesus
- Purification of Mary
- Jesus dedication at the temple
- And now, Jesus is twelve, he is at the age of Bar Mitzvah.

The trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem would take the family four or five days moving at a pace of fifteen miles a day. Friends and family would make this journey together – for safety and for taking care of each other. So the trip is hard. And we should not think of Joseph and Mary as being bad parents because they did not miss Jesus on the return trip home for a whole day. They simply thought him with other family and friends. When they do miss him, they go back to Jerusalem and find him in the temple. They exchange words that let Jesus know they are upset with him. Jesus is under the impression that they would know he is at the temple.

We should not try to make more of the temple scene than it is. Jesus is not presented as some whiz kid of Jewish thought. (I know a famous artist painted this scene and titled it, "Jesus, Teaching in the Temple.") But Jesus is not teaching. He is listening. He is asking questions. He is learning. He is a true Israelite. His family has brought him up according to Jewish custom and law.

Here at 12, his world begins to widen. Maybe a part of the text is to help us understand that Jesus growing is not without tension. "Child, why have you treated us this way? Your Father and I have been searching for you with great anxiety." Parents know something of anxious moments rearing children. There will be more anxious moments for Joseph and Mary.

Maybe this lectionary reading is placed here to encourage us to move on from the manger scene. Sometimes we would like to keep Jesus in the manger – keep him from wandering in the other seasons of our lives. The text for today does call us away from the safe manger scene.

I am encouraged by the human understanding of Jesus in our text. He goes home to Nazareth with his parents and he grows.

- He grows in Wisdom.
- He grows physically.
- And he grows in his relationships with others.

*Continued -*

# PILGRIM C H U R C H

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I believe a part of the intent of the text for today is for us to face the future. What will we do with our living? We will grow in wisdom? Will we grow in our relationships with others? There are those about us who depend on us to do our best. Living out our faith will require our best. Luke says it is time to leave the manger. Time to give our best effort as the people of God. Let us be faithful to that calling.

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