

Sunday 29th December 2024

The First Sunday of Christmas

Gospel Reading

Luke 2.41-52

Other Readings: 1 Samuel 2.18-20,26 Psalm 148 Colossians 3.12-17

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

⁴¹ 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?' 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, and in divine and human favour.

Homily

Our reading today provides us with the first recorded words of Jesus. It's the first time we hear his declaration of his special and unique relationship with his heavenly Father: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" It's a declaration that is repeated in the gospels and ultimately leads to his death. And it comes at an important and significant point in the life of Jesus. Not only is it Passover, when the annual family pilgrimage to Jerusalem happened (a trip of 2 or 3 days from Nazaeth on foot) but it happened when Jesus was 12 years old. It was at this age that a Jewish boy became a man - "a son of the law". It was his opportunity to openly question and discuss the things of God with the Sanhedrin who would meet at this time in public.

It is against this backdrop that this story is set; a story of Jesus being lost and found.

It must have been a nightmare - every parents' nightmare - for Mary and Joseph to discover that, having left Jerusalem a day ago, Jesus was not in the large party of travelling friends, family and neighbours. It was common for the women to set off before the faster-paced men

on the long journey home. So, when Joseph catches up with Mary and they realise that neither of them had Jesus with them, the frantic search begins.

When they find Jesus, Mary's reaction is one, perhaps, familiar to any parent who has lost a child on a shopping trip, or similar. Alongside the deep feeling of relief, is an emotion of anger which displays itself in phrases like: "Where have you been? We've been looking everywhere for you!". It's at this point that Jesus reminds his Mum who he is. Perhaps it's at this point that Mary and Joseph glance at one another and wordlessly recognise that their boy has become a man – **THE** Man of God.

So, where do we sit in this story? Are we searching for Jesus?

Some of us may be searching for Jesus for the first time. We may be carrying on with life as normal; working, looking after family, shopping, sleeping, playing, watching, meeting, drinking, eating. But then we realise that none of this fully satisfies us in answering the questions about our purpose on this earth, or what happens beyond death. Do these things deliver a love that lasts and a peace that transcends our messy and problematic lives? When we conclude that we (like everyone else) live in a messed-up world and live messed-up lives, it is a good time to seek out the one who can rescue us and satisfy our deepest needs.

If that's you, may I encourage you to seek Jesus. Offer a simple prayer asking Him to reveal God's love for you and read about Him in the gospels. Seek and you will find. It's what Jesus promised.

For others of us, perhaps we stand at a point in our spiritual journey where we have been getting on with things as best we can, in our own sweet way. We know Jesus and have walked with Him. But somehow in the busyness of life we have not noticed that somewhere along the way He has been left behind. We thought He was with us but, despite our good intentions our decisions, actions and lifestyle no longer put Jesus at the centre. We have become reliant on our own abilities rather than His strength and guidance.

If that's you, may I encourage you to return to Him. As Mary and Joseph turned back to find Jesus physically, may we turn back to Jesus spiritually and, once again, recognise His divinity and kingship. He waits patiently for us and, as demonstrated in today's reading, He walks again, alongside us, to our destination - a heavenly destination.

Whether, today, you have need to seek out Jesus for the first time or one more time, or you are like Mary and have stored up heavenly treasure in your heart, may we all walk with Him on this journey of life.

Conversation Questions

1. How easy or difficult is it to journey through life without Jesus? Why?
2. What might help us ensure that we 'walk' with Jesus rather than without Him?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?

4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

Almighty God,
who wonderfully created us in your own image
and yet more wonderfully restored us
through your Son Jesus Christ:
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,
so we may share the life of his divinity;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

God in Trinity,
eternal unity of perfect love:
gather the nations to be one family,
and draw us into your holy life
through the birth of Emmanuel,
our Lord Jesus Christ.

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