



THEY RETURNED TO JERUSALEM IN SEARCH OF HIM

12/30/18 Luke 2: 41-52 & 1 Sam. 1: 20-22, 24-28

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ENTERING THE SCENE :

Fr. Richard Rohr says: "Wisdom is not the gathering of more facts and information, as if that would eventually coalesce into truth. Wisdom is precisely a different way of seeing and knowing the "ten thousand things" in a new way. I suggest that wisdom is precisely the freedom to be truly present to what is right in front of you. Presence is wisdom! People who are fully present know how to see fully, rightly, and truthfully." Luke tells us that Jesus was obedient, which in its deepest sense is one who listens and in order to listen we must be present and attentive. We enter another year celebrating family together while at the same time listening in order to grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and each other.

Luke 2: 41-52

41 **Every year** his **parents** went to **Jerusalem** for the Feast of the **Passover**. 42 When he was **twelve** years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the **custom**. 43 After the Feast was over, while his

parents were returning home, the **boy Jesus** stayed behind in **Jerusalem**, but they were **unaware** of it. 44 Thinking he was in their **company**, they traveled on for a day. Then they began **looking** for him among their **relatives** and **friends**. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to **Jerusalem** to look for him. 46 After **three days** they **found** him in the temple courts, sitting among **the** teachers, **listening** to them and asking them **questions**. 47 Everyone who heard him was **amazed** at his **understanding** and his answers. 48 When his **parents** saw him, they were **astonished**. His **mother** said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your **father** and I have been **anxiously searching** for you." 49 Why were you **searching** for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my **Father's** house?" 50 But they did not **understand** what he was saying to them. 51 Then he went down to **Nazareth** with them and was **obedient** to them. But his **mother treasured** all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus grew in **wisdom** and **stature** and in favor with God and men.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus was listening and questioning in order to learn. His questions amazed the "experts". When was the last time a child asked you a question that amazed you and caused you to come to a new understanding of someone or something?

PRAYER: Almost teen Jesus, we hear of your causing anxiety. I sense that there were few anxiety free moments for your parents beginning with the annunciation and the flight into Egypt. Yet we find them journeying to Jerusalem so as to ground you in your faith tradition. Help us as we like Mary and Joseph, live our faith in such a way that our youth are able to amaze us with their understanding and answers. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

EVERY YEAR / CUSTOM: The Passover feast was the defining event in the history of faith of Jesus' people. In celebrating this feast the people were able to keep together throughout their walk in faith with God.

What customs/ feasts does your family celebrate that keeps you together both as family and as God's faithful people?

PARENTS / MOTHER / FATHER: God chooses to create by way of birth. Each of us has parents who co-create with God in bringing to be God's new creation.

How does this feast of the Holy Family help me to connect with God? If I am a parent, do I consider myself a partner in creation history with God?

JERUSALEM / PASSOVER: Passover, the most important feast was observed in Jerusalem whenever possible.

What is the defining feast of my faith life, and where and how do I observe it?

TWELVE / BOY JESUS: Jesus was on the threshold of leaving the world of childhood and entering into the mature faith life of his people. Twelve is a scriptural number indicating completeness.

What is completing for Jesus on this trip to Jerusalem? What images of Jesus as a boy do I have?

UNAWARE / UNDERSTAND: Jesus' parents were unaware of his absence in the crowd of people making the trip home. We are told that they don't understand why Jesus would put them through this anxiety.

What is Luke doing by making a point of this ignorance? What does this tell me about what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph?

COMPANY / RELATIVES / FRIENDS: Jesus was embedded in a tight knit community of family and friends as he grew up.

What kind of community was I embedded in as I grew up? How did it contribute to who I am today?

LOOKING / FOUND: Mary and Joseph finally find Jesus after much searching. But his response to them must have stung and bewildered them.

Have I ever thought I found something or someone only to become bewildered by this find? Are there members of my family that bewilder me? Why? Am I the one that puzzles my family? Why?

THREE DAYS: In the gospel three days becomes the code for a transition period. Jesus was lost in Jerusalem for three days in this text, and later on he will be in the tomb for three days.

Do I get the sense that Luke is setting me up for what is coming with his mentioning the three days? What transition is this text helping me make?

LISTENING / QUESTIONS: In the temple a lot of listening and questioning must have been going on for those three days.

How do I grow in the process of listening and questioning? Am I listened to in my family? Church? At work? Am I free to question in these places?

AMAZED / ASTONISHED: When we can be heard in both our questions and answers, often-amazing things come out of us. We astonish others and ourselves when we are honestly searching for truth.

Has anyone in my family amazed or astonished me recently? How? Have I been the one to amaze and astonish? How? Is the search for truth always a process of amazement and astonishment?

ANCIOUSLY SEARCHING: When we do anything with anxiety, it tends to narrow our focus.

When was the last time I was searching for something in a high state of anxiety? What feelings do I remember about that event? What can this tell me about Mary and Joseph's response to finally finding Jesus?

NAZARETH: Home from the big city to the tiny town of Nazareth, the family settles down into obscurity to continue its daily life of work, prayer, and growth.

What do I think it was like in the everyday life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph? Does my family life have anything in common with what I think theirs must have been?

OBEDIENT: Luke tells us that Jesus was obedient to his family. The word obedient means to listen. We also have heard that he is very aware of God as Father by now.

When I was growing up, was my consciousness of God as my Father? If so, how did I incorporate that into my maturation process? Were my parents aware of God as my Father?

TREASURED: We are told that Mary treasured Jesus' words in her heart from this time forward.

Have I ever 'heard' something that plunged so deep into my heart that it never left me? Do I think that Mary fully understood what all this was to mean before Pentecost?

WISDOM / STATURE: Luke tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature as he matured into his consciousness of what having God as Father really meant.

How has my family helped nurture me into a fuller understanding of God as my creator? How does studying and praying over the gospels help me in this process of understanding?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Lk. 2:41 // Ex. 23:15; Lk. 2:47 // Lk. 4:22; Lk. 2:52 // Lk. 2:19;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Sir. 3:2-6, 12-14; [Ps. 128:](#) 1-5; Col. 3:12-21; Lk. 2:41-52

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Sam. 2:18-20, 26; [Ps. 148:](#) Col. 3:12-17; Lk. 2:41-52

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Children are their parents' guests. They come into the space that has been created for them, stay for a while - fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years - and leave again to create their own space. Although parents speak about "our son" and "our daughter," their children are not their property. In many ways children are strangers. Parents have to come to know them, discover their strengths and their weaknesses, and guide them to maturity, allowing them to make their own decisions. The greatest gift parents can give their children is their love for each other. Through that love they create an anxiety-free place for their children to grow, encouraging them to develop confidence in themselves and find the freedom to choose their own ways in life. Henri Nouwen

The largest part of Jesus' life was hidden. Jesus lived with his parents in Nazareth, "under their authority" (Luke 2:51), and there "increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and with people" (Luke 2:52). When we think about Jesus we mostly think about his words and miracles, his passion, death, and resurrection, but we should never forget that before all of that Jesus lived a simple, hidden life in a small town, far away from all the great people, great cities, and great events. Jesus' hidden life is very important for our own spiritual journeys. If we want to follow Jesus by words and deeds in the service of his Kingdom, we must first of all strive to follow Jesus in his simple, unspectacular, and very ordinary hidden life. Henri Nouwen

All practice is preparation for the integrated acts of unrehearsed living. All practice yearns for a chance to apply itself in real time. Mark Nepo

If you do not have someone to guide you, to teach you, to hold onto you during the times of not knowing, not feeling, not understanding, you will normally stay at your present level of growth. This is the work of a good spiritual director or teacher, or even an effective homily. Now you perhaps see why Jesus praised faith even more than love. Love is the goal, but faith is the laborious journey toward it. Richard Rohr

In order to construct our life's container we all need some help from "the perennial tradition" that has held up over time. We cannot each start at zero, entirely on our own. Life is far too short, and there are plenty of mistakes we do not need to make—and some that we need to make. We are parts of social and family ecosystems that are rightly structured to keep us from falling, but also, more importantly, to show us how to fall and also how to learn from that very falling. We are not helping our children by always preventing them from what might be necessary falling, because we learn how to recover from falling by falling! It is precisely by falling off the bike many times that you eventually learn what the balance feels like. Those who have never allowed themselves to fall are actually off balance, while not realizing it at all. That is why they are so hard to live with. Please think about that for a while. Richard Rohr

Lk. 2:41–52: Jesus in the Temple. 41: Every year, Luke continues the themes of Jerusalem, Temple, and Torah. Passover, one of three pilgrimage festivals (with Sukkot/Booths and Shavuot/Weeks), see Ex 23:14–17; Deut 16:1–8,16; also Lk 22:7–13. 42: Twelve years old, the story is not, contrary to popular teaching, Jesus' bar mitzvah; for thirteen as the age of adult responsibility, see m. Nidd. 5:6; m. Avot 5:21; Gen. Rab. 63:10; for twelve, regarding vows and fasting, Sifre Num. 22; b. Ber. 24a. 47: Stories of heroes' prodigious wisdom are conventional (e.g., Cyrus [Herodotus I, 114f.], Alexander the Great [Plutarch, Life of Alexander 5], Moses [Ant. 2:230; Philo, Life of Moses 1.21]; Josephus, Life 9, records: "when I was a child, about fourteen years of age, I was commended by all for the love I had of learning; on which account the high priests and principal men of the city frequently came to me together, to know my opinion about the accurate understanding of points of the law"). 48: Father, see 2:33n., anticipating the irony of Jesus' response in 2:49. 49: Father's house, the phrase is common in the Tanakh but not in reference to the Temple. 51: See 2:19. 52: 1 Sam 2:26; Lk 1:80; 2:40; similar terms describe Moses (Ant. 2:231; Philo, Life of Moses 1.19); see also Prov 3:4.

Pg. 103. Levine, Amy-Jill & Brettler, Marc Zvi. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#). NY: Oxford Univ. Press. 2011

"If the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would keep it in port forever." – Thomas Aquinas

Growth is moving from a point of view to a viewing point.

When every situation which life can offer is turned to the profit of spiritual growth, no situation can really be a bad one. - Paul Brunton

Hiddenness is an essential quality of the spiritual life. Solitude, silence, ordinary tasks, being with people without great agendas, sleeping, eating, working, playing...all of that without being different from others, that is the life that Jesus lived and the life he asks us to live. It is in hiddenness that we, like Jesus, can increase "in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and with people" (Lk. 2:52). It is in hiddenness that we can find a true intimacy with God and a true love for people. Even during his active ministry, Jesus continued to return to hidden places to be alone with God. If we don't have a hidden life with God, our public life for God cannot bear fruit. (August 11 reading) Nouwen, Henri. [Bread For the Journey](#). NY: HarperSanFrancisco. 1977.

We are better persons when we carry tension, as opposed to always looking for its easy resolution. To carry tension, especially great tension, is to ponder in the biblical sense. Rolheiser, Ronald. [The Holy Longing](#). NY: Doubleday. 1999.

If we take seriously the attribute of divine omnipresence and the revelation of God as Love, then we cannot help but affirm that God is lovingly present always and everywhere. There is no place or circumstance in which this is not the case, so the question this raises for us is whether we are open to this ongoing encounter with God. In each and every moment, our attention is "somewhere," but where? Are we open to the God who is lovingly present to us, or are we "somewhere else?" Phil St. Romain

The child's smallness and inadequacy is the "open sesame" to a future and to the unfolding of potentiality. The child's unknowing is also fertile. In the Gospel, the child Jesus is separated from his parents on a trip to Jerusalem, and he is found discussing points of theology with the rabbis in the temple. Is this a miracle story, or is it a reminder of the special intelligence of the child, so unformed and yet, as Jung says, so wise? Nicholas of Cusa, the great fifteenth-century theologian who wrote a book about the importance of "educated ignorance," says we have to find ways to unlearn those things that screen us from the perception of profound truth. We have to *achieve* the child's unknowing because we have been made so smart. Zen also recommends not losing the "'beginner's mind," so important for immediacy in experience. Moore, Thomas. Care of the Soul. NY. HarperCollins Pub. 1992. Pages 51-2.

What is your vision? Imagine you are in a place and time prior to coming to this planet. You looked upon the earth and made a promise to fulfill a dream. What was the promise? What does your soul long for? What special talents did you bring to this planet? Where can you most be of service? Finding your calling is to discover what you naturally love to do. What activities are easy and joyful for you? Honor and cherish them. These are your gifts and talents. Explore how you can bring these qualities to the work you are doing right now. Work takes on a different meaning when you understand your role, and the organization's role in the Big Picture. Align yourself with people and ideas that stimulate and inspire you. If your vision is to succeed it must be shared. Cultivate a sense of curiosity, awe and wonderment as you imagine your ideal future. Write down and collect images to describe your ideas. Bohm says "Imagination is already the creation of form; it already has the intention and all the movements needed to carry it out." Naiman, Linda. *Transforming the Way We Live and Work*.

The history of spirituality tells us that we must learn to accept paradoxes, or we will never truly love anything, or see it correctly. (Normal thought would say you are either human or divine, but you can't imagine being both until you meet Jesus!) Seeming contradictions are not impediments to the spiritual life, they are an integral part of it. They don't encourage you to abandon your critical faculties, but to sharpen them. "Paradox" comes from two Greek words: para + doksos, meaning beyond the teaching or beyond the opinion. A paradox emerges when you've started to reconcile seeming contradictions, consciously or unconsciously. Paradox is the ability to live with contradictions without making them mutually exclusive, realizing they can often be both/and instead of either/or. G. K. Chesterton said that "a paradox is often a truth standing on its head to get our attention"! Richard Rohr

The feast of the Holy Family is a movable feast and is celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas. This devotion developed in the 17th century and by the 18th century prayers were composed for a special Mass. Pope Leo XIII consecrated families to the Holy Family. In 1921, Benedict XV extended the Divine Office and Mass of the feast to the whole church.

Be content to progress in slow steps until you have legs to run and wings with which to fly. - Padre Pio

Buddha: 566?–c480 B.C., Indian religious leader: founder of Buddhism.

Meanwhile, the King, having noticed that the Bodhisattva (Buddha) was missing, inquired concerning his absence, asking: "Where has the young prince gone? I do not see him anywhere." So a great crowd of people spread out in all directions to look for the prince. Shortly, one of the King's advisors caught sight of the Bodhisattva in the shade of the jambu tree, seated with his legs crossed, deep in meditation. (Lalitavistara Sutra 11)

Borg, Marcus & Riebert, Ray. East Meets West: The Uncanny Parallels in the Lives of Buddha and Jesus. Bible Review. 10/1999. Pages 18ff.

Twelve years after the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, the Holy Family return Jerusalem and Jesus returns to the Temple this time by himself. Mary and Joseph search for him frantically for three days. When at last they find him listening to and asking questions of the teachers in the Temple Mary asks, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." Jesus responds, "Did you not know that I must in my Father's house?" But, Luke reports "they did not understand what he said to them ... [but] his mother treasured all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:48-51). The late New Testament scholar Raymond Brown wrote: "Luke's idea is that complete acceptance of the word of God, complete understanding of who Jesus is, and complete discipleship is not yet possible. This will come through the ministry of Jesus and particularly through the cross and resurrection. Clearly, Luke is not painting an idolized portrait of Mary or Joseph. Rather he paints a very human and realistic picture of Mary and Joseph as good parents, anxious, concerned, striving to be obedient and understanding, but not yet comprehending. Brown adds, however, that "Luke does not leave Mary on the negative note of misunderstanding. Rather in 2.51 ["his mother treasured all these things ..."] he stresses her retention of what she has not yet understood and ... her continuing search to understand."

Of course, in the end, Luke portrays Mary as successfully making the spiritual journey into the family of faith; in Acts 1:14 when the apostles gather in the upper room after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Mary is with them. But the story of Simeon and Anna suggests Mary had much to learn before she could enter into the Kingdom, and into the spiritual family of faith, which they already belonged to, and which is to be the primary family of Jesus in the eschatological age. Luke's Christmas story is full of surprising reversals of fortunes and roles, in which outsiders become more intimate associates than family members, and in which women play a more active role than men. In this way Luke both prepares for and signals one of his major themes in the Gospel of Luke and in Acts—the least, the last and the lost are becoming the most, the first and the found with Jesus' coming.

Witherington, Ben, III. [Mary, Simeon or Anna: Who First Recognized Jesus as Messiah?](#) Bible Review. 12/05. Pgs. 12ff.

Wisdom is not the gathering of more facts and information, as if that would eventually coalesce into truth. Wisdom is precisely a different way of seeing and knowing the “ten thousand things” in a new way. I suggest that wisdom is precisely the freedom to be truly present to what is right in front of you. Presence is wisdom! People who are fully present know how to see fully, rightly, and truthfully. Richard Rohr

Mary kept all these things in her heart. Her incomprehension became a new womb to hear and receive the Word in darkness. It was a word which she did not reject, but nurtured until it should choose to reveal its meaning. The child continued to grow and develop in wisdom and grace before God and men. This family is holy, not because of some assured status, but because of its openness to God's continual sending of his Spirit who inwardly moves and forms their hearts. The peace of Christ did not numb, deaden or put their hearts to sleep. It reigned in their hearts, living and active. Fr. David Bock

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2012. Pgs23-26..

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007. Pgs 24-28.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2010. Pgs.20-23.

White, William R. [Stories For the Journey](#). Augsburg Pub. House. Minneapolis, MN. LOST AND FOUND: 1988. Pages 41-2.

Weems, Ann. [Kneeling in Bethlehem](#). Westminster Press, Philadelphia. 1980. IT IS NOT OVER: Page 85.

Grana, Janice. [Images](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN. 1976. TIME: Page 110. JOURNEYING: Page 143.