



Two Boys Walk into a Church....

I Samuel 1:18-21, 26

Luke 2:41-52

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A Sunday School teacher asked her class why Joseph and Mary took Jesus with them to Jerusalem. A small child replied, 'They couldn't get a baby-sitter. '

This introduces our next scripture reading from Luke, a story about another boy in church.

Read Luke 2:41-52

Our two scripture passages today are from the lectionary – both stories about a boy in church. Which reminds me of this story about a boy in church:

"May I ask a question?" Ben asked. "Of course, go ahead, ask your question," replied the pastor. "Well, the Bible says that the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea," continued Ben, 'also that the children of Israel built the temple, the children of Israel did this and the children of Israel did that. Didn't the grown-ups ever do anything?"

Ah, faith through the eyes of a child. Today we look at faith through the eyes of 2 boys. One who literally grows up in the temple, visited by his mother once a year. Samuel. The other about a boy who visited the temple only once a year but was deeply drawn to it. Jesus.

I have always been intrigued with this story about Jesus. It is the only story we have about his childhood. In fact, we don't hear about Jesus again until 18 years later. Why was this story important for the author of Luke to include it in his Gospel? Let's take a look at it.

Often times, people become critical of Mary and Joseph's parenting skills because they lost Jesus. While raising your children, did you ever lose a child for a brief

moment? Or perhaps, a grandchild? Do you remember the feelings that you felt? The anxiety. The panic. And that is only 5 minutes after losing a child. Imagine losing your child for 3 days as Mary and Joseph did.

On Christmas Day, I went to see the movie *Mary Poppins Returns*. The original *Mary Poppins* was a big part of my childhood. I saw the movie many times, bought the album and memorized the words to every song. And sang them over and over again, probably to the annoyance of my parents.

In the new *Mary Poppins* movie, there is a song called "The Place Where Lost Things Go." Michael Banks has grown up and has two children. His wife passed away several years earlier, and the children are missing their mother. *Mary Poppins* sings to them the song "The Place Where Lost Things Go." Here is one of verses:

Do you ever dream or reminisce
Wondering where to find what you truly miss
Maybe all those things that you love so
Are waiting in the place where the lost things go

Jesus is lost. At least, his parents have lost him. How did this happen? Did he go to the place where lost things go?

Back then, people traveled in large groups with neighbors and relatives. The men would travel in front together, animals and possessions in the center, the women bringing up the rear. The children would normally be assigned an animal or bundle to take care of, but they usually ran around among the large caravan.

Little wonder that Mary and Joseph assumed Jesus to be somewhere in the midst of the caravan's chaos and did not miss his presence until everyone stopped and settled in for the night. Nobody had seen Jesus. Immediately Joseph and Mary retraced their steps and trekked back to Jerusalem. It took them a whole day.

Can you imagine what they are thinking: They had been entrusted with the Son of God, and then they lost him. This is definitely a "bad day."

The first couple chapters of Gospel of Luke are very interesting. The beginning is filled with angel visitations, miraculous pronouncements, beautiful songs, and the birth of the Savior of the world. And it ends with a lost child, panicked parents, a frantic search. It starts out heavenly, and ends up getting pretty earthly.

It took Mary and Joseph one whole day to get back to Jerusalem, but two more days of panic and anxiety as they searched for him. Where is Jesus? Maybe if they thought about it, Jesus would go where lost children of God go...to church.

I love the way The Message translation describes what happens when they finally find Jesus in church: “The next day they found him in the Temple seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The teachers were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt.

His mother said, “Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you.”

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ He said, “Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?” But they had no idea what he was talking about.”

This is the first glimpse we get that Jesus has a close relationship with God. He calls God Father. A relationship that God confirms publically 18 years later when Jesus is baptized, and a voice is heard, “You are My Son, whom I dearly love, and in you I find pleasure.”

In both stories, the boys were actively engaged in what was happening at their places of worship. The passage says Samuel was ministering before the Lord.

Jesus was asking questions of the Rabbis, and they were amazed at his understanding and answers. Rabbis placed little value on simply possessing information about God and scripture. Rabbis wanted to know if students had internalized it, owned it for their life, wrestled with it.

The Rabbis were impressed because Jesus just didn't know facts *about* God. He *knew* God. He had internalized it, owned it for his life. Jesus had such a relationship with God that He called God Father.

Didn't Jesus teach us about this relationship throughout his ministry? He taught his disciples to call God "Father," even "Abba" or Daddy, and invited them into the same relationship with God that Jesus experienced and demonstrated.

Jesus now invites us into that same relationship with God. Do you just know *about* God? Or, do you *know* God? Have you internalized it, owned it for your life?

Both stories stress the need of growth in faith. I am going to read the end of each of our scripture passages; maybe you have already noticed how similar they are:

1 Samuel 2:26 "And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people."

Now look at the end of the Luke passage:

Luke 2:52 "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and [people]. "

We are at the last Sunday of the year, a time when people start thinking about New Year's Resolutions. Maybe it is time for us to look back on this past year, and see if we have grown in favor with God and people.

Are you progressing in your journey of faith? The witness of Scripture is that we do grow in faith, grow beyond the beginning stages of belief to an adult, mature faith. These two boys in church were on their way to that journey. Are you?

It makes a great New Year's Resolution. The description of Jesus and Samuel in these passages is the description of every child of God, no matter what your age, to grow in favor with God and others.

You could say Jesus made a pretty good New Year's Resolution. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" he said. Another way to say it is this: Don't you know that I need to go about my Father's business?

It is said that the highest goal for many Americans is to feel good about oneself. What about taking on Jesus' example of the ultimate resolution: to go about our Father's business?

What is God calling you to do this year to serve God and be in favor with others?

As we head into a new year, make this your New Year's Resolution:
Go deeper in your relationship with God. Make this your prayer: Gracious God, I am Diane, your child, whom you dearly love. I want to go about Your business.

Let's pray that right now, making our New Year's Resolution. Repeat after me placing your name in the prayer: "Gracious God, I am _____, your child, whom you dearly love. I want to go about Your business. Amen."

Children’s message: new year resolutions

“Does anyone know what the date is today?” It is December 30, which means that tomorrow is ... *the last day of the year!* What year? What year will it be the day after tomorrow? Share with the children some of the best things that happened to you over the past year and then ask them to do the same. Share some things you are looking forward to in the year ahead and again, ask them to do the same. Have they ever heard of people making New Year’s resolutions? What are those? It is a method to try to do something better. Share with them a resolution you have for the year ahead. (Perhaps you want to eat five servings of fruit and vegetables every day or to exercise or spend more time in study and prayer.) What are some things they would like to resolve to do better? Today’s Bible lesson tells of a boy named Samuel. The last verse of the lesson is this: “Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man.” Wouldn’t it be great if the very same thing could be said of us at the end of a year? Give each child a bookmark that reads: “Now the child _____ continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people.” Instruct them to put their name in the blank spot.