

**Davidson College Presbyterian Church**  
**Davidson, North Carolina**  
**Mary Margaret Porter**  
**1 Samuel 2: 18-20; Luke 2: 41-52**  
**“Why Were You Searching?”**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas Day**  
**December 27, 2015**

Luke 2:41-52

**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 travelers, 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[l] 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?”[m] **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.

So here we are – a few days after Christmas. The presents are opened. Santa is enjoying a much-earned rest in the North Pole, leftovers fill the fridge and boxes, and wrapping and bows fill the trash can. What now. . .

For some reason it is at this time – immediately post-Christmas – I often think of Jesus’ parents. Partly because I have vivid memories of myself two days after giving birth to my own two sons and partly because let’s face it, for us Protestants, Mary and Joseph get a lot of press pre-Christmas and virtually fall off the Biblical map once little Jesus is born.

Now if I had been Mary and Joseph, and God – by angels – had told me I would carry a Child of God, Messiah, a king who would save all people – I might have strutted around announcing this to anyone who would listen. I would have definitely told the innkeeper who said there was no room – “do you know who I am? I am the mother of the Son of God!!” I certainly would not have settled for an anti-room filled with animals to birth this Son of God.

But this is not the Mary and Joseph we read about in scripture.

Mary was probably uneducated like most females of the day. She was poor because anyone rich would not be engaged to a carpenter. It was a skilled trade but not going to make Joseph lots of money.

They were inexperienced in life because they were so young. Jewish girls were of the time were usually engaged at 10 and married once they hit puberty. Boys were not much older.

From what we know they were just an ordinary Jewish peasant boy and girl – betrothed by their parents. We don’t anything about them until the angels visit.

There isn’t anything seemingly worth about either of them. There’s no commendation of them in scripture. It doesn’t say, “And the virgin’s name was Mary, and Mary was righteous and godly and loved God with all her heart, soul, mind and strength, and served the Lord with all her heart,” and on and on. It doesn’t say that. Zechariah and Elizabeth at least got some special recognition from Luke 1:6.

Although the Catholic church believes that, like Jesus, Mary too was born without sin, – the term ‘virgin birth’ in the Catholic tradition actually refers to Mary’s birth not to Jesus’. However, as Protestants we understand Mary as any other mother – human, imperfect, learning as she goes.

And Joseph, other than being from the house of David, 600 years prior by the way, does not seem that notable either.

Scripture just says, "you've been chosen." It says nothing more about them. We don't ever know anything about their spiritual life.

No - Mary and Joseph are ordinary first time parents - young - surely scared and maybe even a little skeptical about the angelic message they heard.

So you see, as we spend Advent awaiting this miracle, this Christ Child, this Messiah, we, like Mary and Joseph, may be tempted to picture a perfect tiny bundle of joy, with a little halo of light constantly shadowing his little head, lovingly gazing into his mother's eyes. . . just like our own experiences with children right?

But two days after giving birth - what Mary and Joseph hold what seems like an ordinary baby - a crying, wetting, hungry baby Jesus. You see though Jesus, we are told in Scripture, is the true Son of God, heralded by angels and waited on by kings - he is also God incarnate, which means born of flesh . . . human; and all that this entails.

I imagine Mary two days after Jesus' birth - ever grateful for the miracle of his conception and birth but wondering as she awoke for the fifth time that night to feed a wailing hungry baby, why sleep was not a part of God's great gift to her in this child.

I also imagine Mary lovingly indebted to Joseph for sticking around after her scandalous pregnancy, but wishing his generosity extended just a bit to changing diapers or washing clothes.

So surely Mary - looking down at this little child she carried for nine months, exhausted and scared, and in the back of her mind thinking about what the angels told her about this little guy - Son of God - this little wriggly, helpless infant? Surely she heard incorrectly.

The years between the birth of Christ and the beginning of his earthly ministry at age 30 are referred to as "the Silent Years." For some reason known only to God, scripture reveals very little of the childhood, youth, and early manhood of Jesus.

It is easy to assume Jesus went from perfect cherub infant to full blown Messiah overnight, but being incarnate - taking on human form - meant Jesus had to learn, grow and discover what it means to be a friend, son, brother, etc as he grew. And growing in this way means that, although Jesus was without sin - he was also human just like you and me.

And we can assume he matured and developed like any normal child.

Learning to walk - To talk - To run - to fall down. Verse 40 of Luke tells us that he grew physically, he grew intellectually, and he grew spiritually.

We know he had brothers and sisters. The scripture does not relate who the parents of these other children are but we could probably safely assume that Mary and Joseph went on to have other children after Jesus. We can also probably assume that Jesus quarreled with his siblings like most normal children do.

Here in Luke 2 we find one of the only references to Jesus as a child. The family has come to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, commemorating the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt through the death of all the first-born sons. And Jesus, as the first-born son, has come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast.

In fact the situation for this family is much like the one we find ourselves in today. The festivities are over. The holiday is past so everyone is packing up and leaving. The remainder of festival decorations and trimmings are strewn about. The people are joyful yet somehow a little sad that this wonderful time of joy and festivity is over and will not return for another year. The relatives were heading home for another year.

During Jesus' time the way of travelling was with women and children leading to set the pace. Men and young men followed behind. Relatives and whole villages travelled together. It would have been an enormous group, and they kept an eye on each other's children. Being twelve meant that Jesus was at a turning point in his life. He was about at the age when Jewish boys took on adult responsibilities in the faith community. In the *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony, thirteen-year-old boys declared themselves "Sons of the Law" and became full members of the synagogue with the same privileges as older men. So Jesus was in a time of transition from boyhood to manhood and could easily have gone from the children's group to the young men's group and back again without being missed. Joseph would think Jesus was with Mary and other children; Mary would suppose He was with Joseph and the young men, or perhaps their relatives. Only when the day is finished and they are making camp for the night do they realize they can't find their son.

Have you ever left a child behind at the shopping center or have you been left behind yourself? Almost all parents and children have experienced this at one time or another. It is a truly frightening experience. Usually it's for a few moments or minutes - But here Mary and Joseph didn't realize it a couple miles down the road; the text says that they went a day's journey.

They go around asking if anyone has seen Jesus, and nobody had. They had left Jesus behind. So they return to Jerusalem to look for Him. But notice that they don't find Him right away. I don't know where they looked first but maybe after a while, they decide to go pray to God in the temple, or go make a sacrifice to God in the temple. Or maybe they just had looked everywhere else in the city. But for whatever reason, after three days they go to the temple.

There they finally find him - and not just in the temple, He was involved in a theological discussion with the teachers. He was in a Bible study of sorts with the temple leaders. This is not the place the average parent expects to find their twelve-year-old son. But that is where He is.

Joseph and Mary were understandably a little upset at Jesus. He has been missing for several days, and they probably didn't get much sleep during this time. They have been frantically looking for Him, and now, they find Him, calmly sitting in the temple. So Mary - typical first time mom says, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking everywhere for you."

But when Jesus answers she begins to see her child, her son, as who he really is. He responds, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Some translations such as the ESV say Father's House because that is where He was found. Other translations declare he was about his Father's Business. It's difficult to translate because in the original Greek there is no word following Father.

Literally it says, ***Did you not know that I must be about Father.***

Either way, these first recorded words of Jesus in scripture reveal a great deal about his growth as a human and as the Son of God. Jesus here transitions between being concerned with the will of His earthly father, namely Joseph and now being ultimately concerned with the will of His real Father in heaven.

We see from what Luke records of Jesus' words that Jesus was not the one lost. He was exactly where he should have been. It was, in fact, Joseph and Mary who were lost. They were looking for three days, it seems, everywhere for Jesus - and the last place they looked was the first place they should have looked - in the temple. It seemed obvious to Jesus at least, that he - a 12-year-old boy - would be here, in the temple, learning and growing in faith.

I believe there are two great spiritual truths here for all of us.

One - Being a Christian is not *having something*; - knowledge, power, prestige, or assurance - it is a matter of *being someone*. Hear what God says about our identity:

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are! .... " (I John 3:1,2) Children of God – and like Jesus, we must learn, grow, ask questions, listen, and be in fellowship with one another.

It was the custom of the teachers to meet in public in the temple to discuss religious and theological questions where everyone could listen and learn. It is here that they find Jesus, among a crowd of other learners. We must not think of it as a scene where a young Jesus was dominating a crowd of teachers. Rather what we see from this was that Jesus was learning. He was listening, being taught and growing. He did not stay behind in the temple to reveal his power and glory, to announce his place as Messiah or even to show off to the teachers, amaze or “wow” them with His knowledge. He was there to learn. To listen. To ask questions.

Jesus, although He was the Son of God, was also human, and so He had to learn scripture, and learn theology, and learn obedience just like we do. Jesus was fully human, just like we are, and a big part of being human is the learning process.

Jesus Christ, though He was God come in the flesh, knew that before He could teach, He needed to be taught. He knew that the prerequisite to teaching was being teachable. Before He could begin his ministry, He needed to learn.

There are many in the wider church today who want to teach, but do not want to be taught. They want to tell others what they know, but they do not want to learn - who want to be heard without listening.

As James says, be quick to listen and slow to speak. I'm sure you've heard it said that God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason – He wants us to listen more than we talk.

The second spiritual truth in this is that this learning - this awakening that Jesus finds, happens in the temple – not alone on a hill in prayer – not in a dream one night. Many today that yearn for greater spiritual understanding or a personal relationship with God, but eschew the church in favor of individual spirituality and personal soul searching.

But for Jesus – a 12-year-old-boy to have remained in the temple for three days with the teachers and elders indicates to me that he must have been enthralled by what was happening there. He must have been in such awe of what he was hearing that he completely forgot where he was.

Faith does not happen in isolation – God's love is understood only in community. Jesus found that sense of place – that calling to something larger than he knew before – by sitting with others – learning – asking questions and growing.

This is what we are called to be as a church – a safe place for all of God's children to ask tough questions, to grow in faith, to be listened to – a place where a child – or any of us - might get so enthralled in the miracle of grace and the love of God that we forget time.

But lest we think that he was disobedient to his parents, Luke reminds us that Jesus – in the end - was very obedient to His parents. He leaves the temple and goes home with them even though they didn't understand him.

You see, Jesus was still growing into his identity – slowly learning of who he was and who he was to become and so Luke ends this section in the same way he began it. Jesus is still growing up – increasing in wisdom, years and in divine and human favor.

Friends - this is what being a child of God means – constantly growing, learning, asking questions, listening, teaching – all within a community of faith – a church such as this one - that nurtures curiosity, fellowship, love and faith.

So as we wrap up Christmas – don't be so quick to move from the infant Christ child to the adult Messiah. Linger in the childhood of faith – seek out others in this congregation and beyond with which you can learn, grow and ask questions – come to the temple, the church, to be nurtured, to worship, and be in fellowship with one another – and by all means – get lost! Lose track of time in the mysteries and wonder of faith and God. You are a Child of God and you are exactly where you are supposed to be.