

JESUS – THE BOY BORN TO BE KING (Luke 2 41-52)

“And He went down and came with them to Nazareth and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.”

At first acquaintance with this story, which is a very important one, is because it is the only one that gives us any insight of Jesus as a young man. There might seem a strange discrepancy between the ‘boy born to be King’ and the young man of twelve years old who caused his parents a great anguish by going missing for three days and did not seem the least repentant when they found him, only slightly surprised that they should have been concerned. Yet it is a very human story.

As far as Jesus was concerned, it was a very important occasion for him. It marked a milestone in his physical and spiritual development. At twelve years old he became a “Son of the Law” in a Ceremony somewhat resembling our Confirmation, and as the youngest boy present at the solemn Feast of the \Passover it would have been his place to ask the question in the appointed ritual, “what mean ye by this Service?”

The oldest man at the Feast would have told them the story of the Passover:, of God’s protection of the children of Israel by the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the doorposts of their dwellings, when all the firstborn children of the Egyptians were struck down by a mysterious death at the time when Moses came to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians.

Then there would have been the opportunity to listen to the Teachers of the Law, the Rabbi’s. Members of the Temple Sanhedrin were accustomed to sit on the Terrace at Festivals to teach and to answer anyone who came to ask questions. They were the great Teachers of the Nation – the men who knew!

Jesus, who would have been brought up in the strict code of the Jewish faith by his devout parents would also surely have been told something of the circumstances of his birth. I’m sure his parents would have been very careful in the way he was told of these events. He must also have been aware of the very special relationship he had with God whom he called his Father. For he says to his parents, “did you not know that I was bound to be in my Father’s house”?

In the past, the Jew’s knowledge of God was of a Being or Deity apart from them and beyond their understanding, only to be approached with great reverence, fear and respect. Only the high Priest was allowed access to the place of the Altar where the sacrifices were carried out. He was the Father of the Israelite nation not of individuals. Jesus at the tender age of twelve spoke of God as “my Father”. He used the name “Abba” meaning Daddy, only used in family relationships. It was a relationship of love. This gives credence to the saying that “God has come close to us in the person of His beloved son”.

And what of his parents? It was a new lesson for them to learn, a stage in their spiritual development- that they had to ‘let go’. That they must learn to cope with their natural anxieties concerning him at a tender age. It had been such a very

special privilege and a responsibility. But now they must trust in God and trust the care of their child to God and his plans for him.

And what about Jesus? It was quite natural that he should want to be in the Temple, in his Father's house, on this very special occasion when he had 'come of age', and listening to the learned Teachers of the Law who could tell him so much more than he had ever heard before in his little village Synagogue in Nazareth. And they, too, were obviously impressed and inspired by the intelligence and devout fervour of this young man. Then we read those lovely words: that he went down with his parents to Nazareth and was obedient to them. He increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. (Luke 2 51 & 52)

How difficult it is sometimes to 'let go' of the things one wants to do! How often the need to do one's own thing because of the fulfilment and joy and sometimes sense of power or creativity that it brings. Yet, Jesus, conforming to the conventions and customs of the times in which he lived, and sensitive to his parents concern and anxiety for his well-being, quite simply goes with them without further questions and is subject to them, or under their authority. It was another lesson in his spiritual development.

It is not until many years later that we hear anything more of him when at the age of about thirty he was baptised by John the Baptist. – again conforming to a movement of the Spirit which had, at this time, swept through the ranks of the Jewish community. And, of course, it was the start of his public ministry which lasted only three years and led to the crucifixion.

In respect of those years, from the age of twelve to thirty, we know nothing of them. But we believe Jesus stayed quietly at home, looking after his mother and sisters and brothers (of which there is mention) and looking after the carpentry business. It is believed that Joseph, his foster-father died when Jesus was still a young man and Jesus being the oldest had to look after the family.

So we can picture the very human background of Jesus' early life. And it must have been so because we know that when Jesus returned to Nazareth after the start of his public ministry, teaching and healing, his claims of divinity, of being the long-expected Messiah were rejected. "Wasn't he the Carpenter's son", they said, the son of Joseph and Mary? And he was driven out of his home-town never to return. It wasn't until much later, even after the Crucifixion, that it became clear to those who had followed him, who Jesus was, the nature of his messianic calling, his divinity, and that he was truly and in a very special way the Son of God.

So there are several very worthwhile lessons to be learned from this story about the boy Jesus, the boy born to be King, King of the whole world, and of the Universe, and of God's Kingdom upon earth and in heaven.

A Prayer: "Grant Lord, that I may not seek my own well-being at the expense of others. That I may always be ready to make any sacrifice in accordance with your divine will and purpose."

Grant us, Lord, your special grace and understanding that we may learn to grow in wisdom and favour with you and our fellow-beings.