***Lost and Found***

**Luke 2:40-52**

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When I read today’s lesson from Luke I thought about the first time I had a child go missing. This was early on when I had only two children, a son Ben who was four years old and a daughter Becky only three years old. My wife and I along with both kids were shopping. As was our habit, we had split up to do the shopping. When I came back to put my stuff in the cart, there was my wife and Becky but no Ben.

“Where is Ben?” I asked. “I thought he was with you; he was following you.” my wife replied. Here, in a crowded store, stood three fourths of our family with the other fourth nowhere to be seen! Panic began to set in. Trying to stay calm and organized, I asked my wife to go to the service desk and seek help while I back tracked where I had been hoping to find Ben along the way.

With no sign of Ben, my searching became more frantic. I heard over the stores public address system, “Attention sales associates, we have a lost boy in the store.” Then followed a description of Ben. I thought to myself, “Calm down, you know how to handle this.”. I went back to the last place I had seen Ben and began systematically searching outward from there. Each aisle with no Ben increased my trepidation.

Then from the public address system I heard, “Mr. Murray Cooper, please come to aisle 37.” Now aisle 37 was almost at the opposite end of the store. I rushed over and found Ben sitting on the floor next to a store employee. He was reading a comic book. I thanked the store employee who went about his business.

Sitting down next to my lost little boy I asked, “Where have you been?” He looked at me with one of his winning smiles and said, “I was here.” “I was here.” As if that answered everything, implying where else would I be in this store. More or less what Jesus told Joseph and Mary when they found him in the temple.

Our text today is the narrative telling of Jesus appearance at the temple as a boy, perhaps 12 years of age and the events that transpired. But before we get into that story, let’s take a side journey. I want to spend a few minutes talking about how the different evangelists handle Christ’s birth and also the part that Mary plays in the Gospels. Be patient, the reason for this digression will be clear later.

The evangelist Mark has no birth narrative. He simply begins his gospel with John’s baptism and proceeds on from there. Apparently Mark was not concerned with Jesus prior to the beginning of his ministry.

The evangelist Matthew begins his gospel with the genealogy of Jesus, briefly records that Mary was with child from the Holy Spirit, and just as briefly records Gabrielle’s visit to Joseph. The only mention of Jesus’ birth is as part of the story of the wise men and the flight into Egypt. After this, Matthew skips to the ministry of John the Baptist, followed by the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Matthew’s concern was to establish Jesus’ genealogy as the promised Messiah.

The evangelist John begins his gospel with a Trinitarian affirmation of the Son of God and goes on to affirm that he came down to earth and was made flesh. There is no birth narrative and John’s gospel is all about Jesus’ ministry. John was concerned with firmly asserting Jesus’ divinity.

It is in the gospel of the evangelist Luke where we get all of the details of Jesus’ birth and his youth. Luke uses the first two chapters of his gospel relating these events. These narratives affirm Jesus’ divine nature and his unique gifts of grace and wisdom from the time of his conception. Luke is concerned that we know Jesus is the universal savior from the moment of his conception.

What part does Mary play in the gospels? Well, except from her importance as the mother of the Son of God, there is not much mention of her. In the gospel of Mark, Mary is mentioned only three places, most prominently at the crucifixion and at the resurrection. In the gospel of Matthew Mary is mentioned only three places, most prominently in the in Jesus ‘birth narrative and the crucifixion. In the gospel of John, she is never mentioned by name, but only as Jesus’ mother in the narrative of the “Wedding at Cana,” the “Journey to Capernaum,” and the crucifixion.

It is only in the gospel of Luke, where Mary is mentioned eleven times, that we get to see Mary and the experiences that shaped her life. Most of what we think we know about Mary comes from church tradition and is not scriptural. But the abundance of tradition about Mary speaks to a deep interest in her life throughout the history of the church.

Mary’s life was undoubtedly a mixture of joy and sorrow. Joy, because she had been chosen by God to bear Jesus, the Messiah and savior. Sorrow, as she saw her first born son swept up in the politics of power in ancient Palestine. Deep sorrow as she saw him crucified. Have you ever wondered what Mary thought about all that was happening to her and what her son was becoming?

Today’s gospel text gives us a quick look into the mind of Mary. Now Luke’s main purpose for telling this story was to show how even as an adolescent Jesus was filled with wisdom and the favor of God and was already aware of his mission. Searching for Jesus, Joseph and Mary finally found him in the temple with the teachers who were amazed at his knowledge and understanding. Mary tries to scold him for the anxiety he had caused. But Jesus simply replies “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” (Luke 2:49 NRSV) Luke records that after Jesus reply, “his parents did not understand what he said to them.” (Luke 2:50 NRSV)

But it is the second part of the next verse that I want you to think about. “His mother treasured all these things in her heart.” (Luke 2:51b NRSV) Here is an insight into Mary that must have remained with her throughout her life. But how are we to understand this statement? When you think of treasuring something in your heart, what does that mean to you? In our modern context, treasuring something in our heart means to remember something that is precious to us, something that warms our heart.

This modern understanding is not quite what is meant in Luke. In the original Greek we have, “μήτηρ αὐτοῦ διετήρει πάντα τὰ ῥήματα ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς.” (Luke 2:51 NA28) The Greek word being translated as “treasured” is “διετήρει”. Now the best way to translate that into an English word is as “treasured.” However, a Greek reader of the time would have had a different understanding. They would hear or read this as, “His mother carefully remembered all the words he said.”

Remember that just before this Luke tells us, “his parents did not understand what he said to them.” (Luke 2:50 NRSV) Mary was not just remembering something precious, she was remembering Jesus’ words and trying to understand them. She must have spent the rest of her life trying to understand, even after the crucifixion and resurrection. She lost her son when he stayed behind in the temple, she lost him to the multitudes who thronged to hear Jesus’ message, she lost him to the cross. But she never gave up, she saw the resurrection, perhaps then she began to understand.

We too ponder the meaning of all the words we have been taught about Jesus and his mission, trying to understand. But like Mary, we too need to remain faithful, even in our lack of understanding. We need to take it as a matter of faith that we should live as Jesus taught us. Even now he is with us in a way difficult to understand. Now it is we who are lost, but there will come a time when we will see him and then all will be understood.