

1-5-25

## **Seismic Shift**

### **Luke 2: 41 – 52**

Epiphany commemorates the Wisemen's meeting of the boy Jesus. But I'm skipping Epiphany. It's not that I think Epiphany is unimportant. It's because I touched on that subject last week. I guess this is partly due to how I operate. I'm either too early or too late. Rarely am I ever on time!

Instead, I've chosen to fast-forward twelve years after Jesus' birth.

Now to parents of teenagers this is either criminal or a huge relief. On the one hand it's criminal, because we parents want to be recognized for all the blood, sweat and tears we shed to get our children to their teenage years. To fast-forward twelve years is like cheating in football or baseball or checkers. There's no satisfaction in it and it's unethical and immoral.

It hasn't been easy – this parenting stuff - all the conversations we've had, the disciplinary measures we've had to adopt, the lessons we've tried to instill and the questions we've posed to each other and to God.

Don't tell me how to raise a child if you've never done it. Your knowledge is merely theoretical. It's not shaped by the hard knocks of raising real live offspring.

We didn't like the hard knocks, but at the same time, we wouldn't trade them for anything in the world because we have the satisfaction of surviving them and they've made us who we are – for better or worse.

When I say it could be a relief when we fast forward twelve years, I don't mean that parenting stops when your child reaches the teens. It just means that raising a teenager presents a whole new set of challenges and blessings and this is sort of like undergoing a change of scenery. And a change of scenery can be good.

Perhaps you've been living in the flat lands of Michigan your entire life, but then you're plopped down in the middle of the mountains or near the ocean. This change is new and exciting, but it will surely cause you to assess your new environment and make the necessary adjustments.

Maybe one way to describe parenting is thinking of it as a wonderful canoe trip, but with only one paddle to be shared between two paddlers!

And this paddle is needed for a variety of uses –

navigating, taking the right channel

steering clear of hazards like boulders and whirlpools

sounding the depths and discovering where to pull off and portage

disciplining, and serving - just to name a few –

and God have mercy if you ever lose that paddle!

I say all this to bring us to the point in the Bible where the parents of Jesus take their “annual canoe trip” to the Feast of the Passover. It appears that they have been making this family trip faithfully for at least twelve years, maybe more because Luke 2:41 - 42 says, *“Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.*

*When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast according to the custom.”*

It's not unrealistic to think that Mary and Joseph went with their parents who probably also travelled together in their own travel party. So, this family trip has likely been going on for decades – a true family tradition!

But this trip is going to be different in one significant way – and not so much for Jesus as it will be for his parents.

Parents – especially you folks that now have adult children – do recall the time that perhaps you were sitting at the kitchen table and doing whatever, probably taking your “old person pills” when your teenager quietly breezed by you, and for an instant, you mistook them for someone else and at second glance you realized who they were, and you were taken aback, and the first thing that entered your mind was ... my how they've grown, my how they've matured – how they have changed into a young adult right before my very eyes and you were shocked because you didn't see that coming.

Well, you did see it coming, but not at that rate of speed. Sure, down the road sometime in the distant future he or she will finally grow up, but today?

I think this is what happened to Mary and Joseph on this particular trip when Jesus was twelve years old. There was a singular and seismic shift in the landscape as it pertained to their relationship to their son.

He was no longer the little boy who unquestioningly complied to all his parents' wishes.

He had a higher calling that was now manifesting itself in his choices and actions and this threw his parents into a tizzy and took them a while to recognize and accept this shift even though twelve years earlier they were there when the star rested over the manger and the shepherds came to witness the holy birth of which the angels proclaimed, and the wisemen showed up a couple years later bearing gifts - Epiphany

The Bible says that Mary and Joseph did not understand what he meant when their son said, *"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"*

And of course, this is the age-old tension between parent-child relationship: Parent: Hurry up and grow up, but not too fast. Child: I want to be older, but I'm still only a child.

Does this mean because of this seismic shift that everything changed completely in the Messiah's household when they finally returned to Nazareth from that family trip? Did Jesus start making more of the household decisions for his family? Okay here's our budget for this week.

Is that how it worked in your household?

And the Bible doesn't seem to make that point either. Instead, it says, *"he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them."*

Isn't this a beautiful thing? By rights, Jesus could have stayed in Jerusalem and gone to Bible camp and begun networking - developing those all- important relationships with the Biblical

scholars who would one day have to make a choice about following him sort of like Samuel.

But instead, he went home with his mom and dad knowing that he still was under their authority and had much to learn from them and receive from them. Likewise, he had much love to give them - his human 12-year-old boy love that I'm sure every parent cherishes.

Now you might think that at this point, my whole sermon is about parenting and recognizing your child's gifting and how to loosen the reins on your child so he or she can reach their full potential.

But my message is so much more than this. If this is all you get out of my message, then, I've missed the mark.

What we must get out of this message is that a seismic shift in our relationship with God must happen just like it did to Mary and Joseph if we are to move forward in our relationship with God!

In the context of Earth Science, a massive amount of energy is released any time the tectonic plates that make up the earth's crust shift. There are potentially ten or twelve of these plates worldwide. (I don't remember the exact number.)

Sometimes one tectonic plate goes under the other plate.

Sometime the plates get hung up on each other and then suddenly release. And when this happens, a huge amount of energy is released. And this event sends out these waves - P waves and S waves throughout large areas sometimes causing lots of damage.

Sometimes these events are barely detectable and won't register on the scientist's most sensitive equipment. Other ones can be cataclysmic.

But the question is, are we sensitive to these releases of energy?

Are we sensitive to these moments in our lives?

Do we recognize them as God's energy directed toward us to move us toward him?

Do we understand them? Maybe, maybe not.

But are we willing to do what Mary did, *"treasure all these things in her heart."*

The shock waves hit Mary and Joseph. And I don't know how Joseph handled them, but Mary treasured all these things in her heart, the Bible says.

Luke writes that Mary had a similar reaction when the shepherds came to visit them on the night of Jesus' birth, Luke 2:19. And in Luke 2:39 the Bible says that *"the child's mother and father marveled at what was said about him"* referring to Simeon's prophecy directed toward Jesus:

*"My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."*

Remember Jesus was only 8 days old at the time!

To be honest, one of the things that has perplexed me over the years has been trying to understand what it means to treasure something in your heart. I've had a vague notion as to what it may mean: think about the subject often, never forget, keep safe, cherish, guard safely – but this has been unsatisfactory to me.

Then I came across one reference that said ... it could mean to “follow an action through to a definite result.”

Huh, that’s different. So, to treasure something in your heart is to make a commitment to seeing something through to the end?

Wow! This is new to me! I never thought of it that way before. I thought it had more to do with tucking something away, keeping it hidden and safe for a rainy-day sort of thing.

But this reference said it has more to do with holding this truth out in front, not protecting it from harm, but letting it shine brightly, guiding us, directing us and helping us fulfill our commitments and mission.

And that makes sense doesn’t it from Jesus’ mother’s perspective? Doesn’t every bone in Mary’s body want to protect and guard and keep safe her son from the darkness and evil of the world. Every mother wants to do this for her children. It’s built into them. It’s instinctual.

But Jesus isn’t just an ordinary son. He has a mission to accomplish that is unlike any other mission. It is other- worldly. It is supernatural – to be a light to the Gentiles, the glory of Israel and the Savior of all humanity.

So, Mary, by treasuring these things in her heart is doubling down on her commitment - to follow an action through to a definite result:

To raise her boy to young man status so he can fulfill his mission. She has nearly twenty more years ahead of her to fulfill her commitment. (Jesus was probably 30 years old when he started his public ministry.)

Thank God for Mary's commitment.

Now how about us?

What will we hold in front of us to keep us going toward Jesus and his fulfillment of his mission?

What will we treasure in our hearts that will keep us moving toward a life of holiness and godliness and service?

Maybe it will be different for each of us at least in how we express it, but however we express it, it has to encompass the fundamental truth about God and his Son and his relationship with us:

That the Father has sent his Son into the world to bring us back to Himself not because we are worthy or because he was bored and had nothing else to do, but because God is love and He has moved and heaven to make it happen.

I hope you see this truth and embrace it and treasure it in your heart. It will be your guiding light in the days and months and years to come. Amen.