

I'm sure that Luke Chapter 2 is preached on many, many times throughout the Christmas period. Sometimes the passage about the presentation at the temple, 40 days after Jesus' birth, would also be mentioned. (Mathematically, if Jesus was born on the 25th December then 40 days would be the 3rd of February! So, how appropriate that we think of it right now.) But actually that's not what I want to mention. I want to look at what is mentioned next. The visit to the temple, not for purification after childbirth, but for the annual remembrance of the Passover, and more specifically, the losing of Jesus when he was 12 years old.

Luke Ch 2 verses 41-51. We are told that Mary and Joseph went every year to Jerusalem, as was the custom. It is our "custom" to have our Church Annual General Meeting, every year about this time. Is it your "custom" to attend?

How sad that Mary and Joseph did what they always did, then returned home, but they were unaware that Jesus was no longer with them. Is it possible, do you think, that individuals, maybe even churches and organisations, could carry on doing what they have always done, year after year, and be unaware that Jesus was no longer with them? It took Mary and Joseph one day to realise and three days to find him. Can you imagine the panic after they realised he was gone? In fact Mary uses the words, "anxiously searching." The first day they were "blissfully unaware". The next 2 days must have been awful. But, isn't it better to know that something is wrong, even though it is stressful and painful to put it right, than to feel good about yourself but be in real danger?

Mary and Joseph blame Jesus. But do you think it was his fault? Surely the answer has got to be no. It couldn't ever be Jesus' fault. It must have been that Mary and Joseph were at fault for carrying on "as usual" without realising that they should have perhaps stayed longer. They looked for Jesus in the social context amongst family and friends. But he wasn't there. They eventually found him in an education setting, amongst teachers and questions. Is our church social or educational? What should it be? Perhaps it should be both. Have we got the balance right?

Let's listen and be amazed at Jesus' answers. Let's treasure up all these things in our hearts. Let's together, as individuals and as a church, grow in wisdom and in stature, in favour with God, and with men. Let's make sure that we stay with Jesus, and not just expect him to follow us.

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