

The twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple



Luke 2:41-52

When Jesus was twelve years old, his parents took him along to the Passover feast in Jerusalem for the first time according to tradition. His parents missed him on the return journey. After three days of desperate searching, they finally found him in the temple. He was having a discussion with the scribes and teachers. When his parents reproached him, he answered: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" He then returned to Nazareth with them.

The children realize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

In the little town of Nazareth, Mary, Joseph and the twelve-year-old Jesus are preparing for a journey of several days. Mary and Joseph, together with numerous other pilgrims, travel to Jerusalem each year for Passover. This year Jesus is allowed to go with them. He is very happy and excited about it. He has heard so much about the great city with its beautiful temple and the sanctity of its divine services. "Can we go now?" he keeps asking impatiently. Finally they set off on their journey.

On the way, Joseph once more explains to Jesus the origin and meaning of Passover. "You know," Joseph begins, "that our people used to live in Egypt. Our ancestors had to work very hard as they were slaves. But the Lord liberated them from their bondage. One day he ordered every family to slaughter a lamb, to eat it that night and to be ready to travel. Thereafter the Egyptian Pharaoh permitted them to leave. Imagine their happiness! We celebrate this liberation every year and thank God for it, and that is why we are now travelling to Jerusalem." Jesus has been listening attentively. He finds it all very fascinating although he has heard it often before. The journey to Jerusalem takes several days. They meet many friends and relatives along the way who are also going to Jerusalem. They spend the nights in local inns or in tents. The closer they come to the city, the more people fill the streets all around them. The people approach Jerusalem cheering and

singing. Amazed, but happy and excited, Jesus walks along with them.

Soon he catches his first glimpse of the wonderful, elevated city. The temple-complex towers majestically above all the other buildings. A wall with many turrets and towers surrounds the city. Jesus' heart beats faster. They have finally arrived!

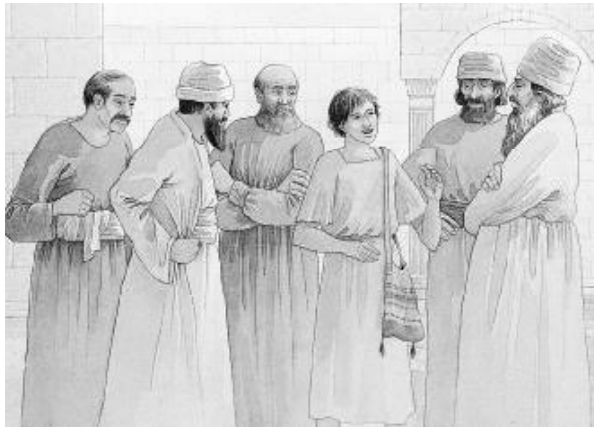
Seven happy feast days now commence. Jesus watches respectfully as the paschal lamb is slaughtered. There is so much to see and do. But most of all, Jesus loves to be right inside the temple-complex. He feels closer to his Father here than in the hustle and bustle of the city below.

After the feast, the streets of Jerusalem empty quickly. The pilgrims return to their villages and cities. Mary and Joseph also start on their journey home. Jesus is not with them. In the confusion of packing up, they have lost sight of him. But they are not worried. He must have gone on ahead with some of their relatives from Nazareth. Along the way, Mary and Joseph ask everyone whether they have seen Jesus. They look for him everywhere, but cannot find him. Now Mary is getting really worried about her son: "Where can Jesus be? Could he possibly still be in Jerusalem?"

Mary is now so anxious that she cannot sleep any more. The next morning Mary and Joseph leave early to return to Jerusalem. The city has become very quiet and only a few people still remain. The parents hurry through many narrow streets and alleys in search of their son. Everywhere they ask: "Have you seen Jesus? We have lost our son!" But no one

Jesus Christ is the Son of God

can help them, some merely shake their head in pity and sympathy. Mary is in despair and crying by now. Soon it will be dark and they will have to call off their search for that day. Jesus has been missing for two days by now! Mary ponders: "Where could he possibly be? Could something have happened to him?" They pray throughout that night hoping to find comfort and peace. On the third day Mary and Joseph look for Jesus in the temple.



Here, too, everything is back to normal. Mary hurries through the large forecourt looking for her son everywhere. In one of the halls she sees many scribes and teachers in discussion. And she spots her son right in the midst of them! He is listening attentively to the teachers, asking questions and giving answers which greatly amaze these wise men.

"Jesus, we have been looking for you everywhere!" Mary exclaims. She is overjoyed and relieved, but after all they have been through, they cannot help but scold him: "We have been so worried and anxious about you! How could you do this to us?" Bewildered, Jesus looks at them: "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

Mary and Joseph are very happy to have found Jesus again. Soon the three of them are on their way home to Nazareth.

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When Jesus was twelve years old, his parents took him along to the Passover feast in Jerusalem for the first time. On the homeward journey Mary and Joseph noticed that Jesus was not with them any more. After three days of desperate searching, Mary and Joseph finally discovered him in the temple. He was speaking to the scribes and teachers there. When they scolded him, he said: "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

- 1 We introduce the story the following way: Jesus grew up in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. He was a normal child, playing and learning just like you. Nothing is recorded in the Bible concerning his childhood. But we do know something about the twelve-year-old Jesus which I want to tell you now.
- 2 We look at and discuss the picture with the children. What could Jesus have spoken about to the scribes and teachers? Why are they amazed? (Jesus asked questions and gave answers himself. The listeners marvelled at his knowledge. God's wisdom was in him.)
- 3 Why did Jesus go into the temple? (Already in his youth Jesus felt drawn to the teachers in the temple. He felt very close to his heavenly Father there. In the discussions which he had with the teachers concerning God, he became conscious of his divine origin.)
And what about us? We are of divine origin too. We are God's children. When and where are we particularly close to our heavenly Father? (When we hear God's word in the divine services or during family visits / when we hear Bible stories / when we meet with other children of God and with our bearers of blessing / when we pray.)