

TRINITY NEWS

Christmas II An Unusual Glimpse of Jesus in the Company of the Wise as a Young Person

Christian writing, teaching and preaching should be vivid, lively and original. The third “should” may cause eyebrows to raise, sparking weighted words in response to “original”. It was Augustine, the most repeated of the profound earlier thinkers of the post-apostolic centuries, who said, “Better the blame of the literary critics than not understood by the people.” But how can we be “original” when our foundation documents from Judaism and early Christianity span a thousand years in accumulation, and almost two millennia since?

The documents themselves contain the seeds of a response. They are “ever new” (Gadamer) and “plurivocal” (Ricoeur). Inside the cover of my Greek New Testament I long ago placed some words by Jerome who gave us early insights through his beautiful phrasing of Scripture in Latin: “In the words of the Gospels the Spirit has been joined to the letter; and whatever at first sight seems to be cold, if you touch it, grows hot.” The Scriptures are ever-fresh and multi-voiced, not just by their intent and our focus, but by the touch of the Holy Spirit remembering it all before our eyes and making it self-evident in our minds.

Let us test this in the passage before us today from Luke chapter 2:41-52. We know nothing of the early years of Jesus after his presentation in the Temple as a baby until this incident when he was 12 years old. Where did Luke get this story from and why has he included it? It certainly fills a need for more information about him, and we hugely appreciate it. The details are well known to us, and the assertive conclusion that he went back to Nazareth with his parents after it and was obedient to them and grew in wisdom and stature with God and humanity is a strong finish to the narrative. It mirrors in part some words about his kinsman John the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth at Luke 1:80. The motif of the child with incredible potential is underlined in both cases.

The details are vivid enough from Luke’s recollection and literary artistry. What life pictures does it draw for this stage of the life of Jesus of Nazareth? Unless the story relates to his life and to our own journey, then it is pretty prose lost in the misty trails of history. Though woven into the web of our humanity, Jesus is an original. Anything about his story has a touch of the original because he gives a distinctive stamp to everything

that touches him. No birth as ever been so much talked about, and the sparse details of his life have been relentlessly perused. I sit in the church and I look at the cross, signifying his ultimate freedom from its constraints, and I wonder about this boy in Jerusalem. He seems to see the world in an upside-down way. Without discounting his undoubted love for his parents, his constant search for God in everything takes precedence here. But he leaves the company of the wise and their ponderings about his meeting with them, and goes home in obedience to his parents. His growth in wisdom and stature continues amongst his people and before God, though hidden from us until he was 30 years of age. Let us reflect again on a treasured moment. What is vivid, lively and original about it? Why is the story convincing in itself?

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Thursday, January 9.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10: a.m., Chapel.

Saturday, January 11.

- Vestry Special Meeting, 9:00 a.m., Rectory.

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 89; Acts 10:34-38; Matthew 3:13-17

Parish Annual General Meeting (AGM):

January 26, 2014 after the 9:30 service
