

## 2024 TALK FOR CAREY, 14.1.24, ALL-AGE, LUKE 2:41-52

### TO GROW – LISTEN FIRST

At the end of this story, about the nearly teenage Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem, we are told that Jesus continued to grow in ‘wisdom & stature’. It reminds me of when I was 12 or thereabouts. How visiting relatives used to say: ‘Oooh, haven’t you grown!’. ‘Aren’t you getting tall!’... And they would insist on doing height comparisons with other family members, to see how tall I was getting. Or when I was a bit older, people would start asking me: ‘Oooh, how tall are you exactly?’... I’m sure our young people here will probably identify with these kind of experiences... ! I share your ‘growing pains’ !

As a young person, Jesus was clearly dead set on growing up into the likeness of his Heavenly Father. Why else would he have spent these four days in God’s house, with the leading minds of his day? We all need to grow, don’t we? Most of us don’t need to grow any more **physically**... But we all still need to grow more spiritually. Our heart & brains need to grow more – so that we can be more like Jesus.

(It's funny, when I look back at old photos of myself, I instantly recognise myself, even though I look quite a lot different than I did in my teens. But, when I look back at my old sermons... When I look back at my old prayer journals, I hardly recognise myself. I have done a lot of growing over the last 30 or 40 years).

How did Jesus grow in wisdom and stature? He grew first by listening. This is the first activity he is described as doing, while he was with the Teachers of the Law. Jesus listened intently. Secondly, he asked questions. Then, lastly, he answered some questions he was asked. And he grew in understanding. He grew in favour with God & with people. He was a child prodigy of his time. Ironical to compare this, with Jesus’ later experiences in the Temple. Here, he is seen as ‘boy wonder’, by the authorities. Once an adult, he is seen as a threat.

There’s lots we can take from this story. Many of us will identify with the panic of Mary & Joseph. Some of us may wonder why Jesus would put his parents through this – and not seem at all bothered when they chided him for ‘treating us like this’... Did Jesus break the commandment to ‘honour your father & your mother’?... ? But I like to think he wasn’t deliberately disobedient, he just

didn't tell his old mum & dad his plans... And Luke is very careful to say, after this incident, that Jesus was 'obedient' to his parents when he returned home.

Mary & Joseph were cross with Jesus. Some of us herer may have felt a similar frustration with Jesus at times. Sometimes we wonder whether Jesus understands. Whether he really 'gets' our situation, our particular problems. These words of Joseh & Mary come close to echoing the words of the disciples in the boat during that storm: 'Jesus, don't you care?'... Jesus did care, of course, but he also knew that his parents would find him – all in good time... !

Thing is, like Mary & Joseph, we don't 'understand'. We are 'slow to believe the good news'. It takes time & work on our part, for the wonder of Jesus to completely 'sink in'. As with Martha, in another gospel story, we are 'worried an upset by many things'. But Jesus says: 'Only one thing is needed.'... The answer to any difficulty we face in 2024, is to listen closely to God. Jesus, as ever, is the one non-anxious presence in this story. Jesus has found his rightful place, his home in the Temple. Jesus is focussed on His Heavenly Father. When we learn this simple lesson, everything else falls into place. 'Seek ye first...'

Life & growth always involve some pain. (Change is uncomfortable). I am sure that during 2024, Carey BC will experience some 'growing pains'. It comes with the territory, of being a human being - and being a follower of Jesus.

I have some questions to finish – for myself & us all.

- How will you & I grow in wisdom & in grace in 2024 ?
- What does it mean for you & I to be 'about our Father's business' this year?
- Will we listen closely to God in 2024? Will we grow in favour, with God and with people ? ... May it be so, in the name of Jesus, amen.