

Jesus in the temple

January 1st

We've probably not yet finished all the Christmas catch ups. I know that my family is all off to the Mirboo area today for Ross' family Christmas. But the lectionary does not leave us to celebrate at the stable or even in Bethlehem for long this year. Today we jump from the manger to the Temple in Jerusalem when Jesus is twelve years old. We'll be going back to his early childhood next week, but in the meantime, we are faced with a young Jesus who is very human – learning, debating, growing, looking rather like Samuel did when he was a boy. One of the toughest choices we will make in our faith is to really take the humanity of Jesus seriously.

This is the one story in the Scriptures from Jesus' childhood – when his parents forgot him in the Temple. Then, with next week being Epiphany, we go back in time again, to the visit of the magi. The difference is that, while Christmas seeks to explore the event of the incarnation, Epiphany begins to tease out the meaning of the incarnation. Epiphany is the season which follows Christmas and it leads us still deeper into an understanding of Jesus through the eyes of various people who encountered him, especially through the wise ones who come from different faith traditions.

But this Christmas season continues today, showing the different ways that God's glory was manifest in Jesus as a young lad, pointing to his role as the Christ. That means that we are still seeking to gain some grasp of what the incarnation really means- Jesus being fully God, yet also fully human. The clue in the Lectionary this week is in the reading from 1 Samuel which forms a kind of parallel with the Gospel. Both Samuel and Jesus were at home in the temple from a very young age. Both had parents who valued and visited the Temple. Both became teachers and leaders of God's people. And both were completely human. As such, both had to learn and grow and be nurtured into their ministries. In a similar way, the Psalm speaks of God as the one who strengthens all of creation – which responds in praise. Finally, in Colossians, God's people are also called to learn and grow into the life of following Christ – a life of compassion, harmony and peace. We are urged to choose to 'put on love' everyday, just as we choose which clothing we will wear.

The account of Jesus in the temple this week focuses on his humanity- we see him coming to understand more about his heavenly Father. Just like any child, Jesus grows into his adult understanding of himself and his earthly role. His call for us to follow him is based in the truth that his life was completely human, and therefore completely accessible for us. It also means that as we follow Jesus, we do so with the same need to grow, learn, change, fail and develop as Jesus did. Our faith is a pathway that enables us to journey through our humanity with deeper meaning, understanding and connectedness to God and to others. AS we follow Jesus more closely, we become fully human, able to accept ourselves, to forgive those who have offended us and to reach out in God's love.