

Jesus, the boy, tells us the Purpose of his life.

Luke 2:41-52

*Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

.....

*I all on earth forsake –
Its wisdom, fame, and power –
And Him my only portion make,
My shield and tower.*

Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem **every year** at Passover-time. The Law only required **men** to go – but **women** were encouraged to go as well. And as Passover was a family celebration in the home, I think it probable that only the youngest children stayed behind.

At the age of 12, Jesus was on the threshold of manhood. Now, when Jewish boys are 13, they are regarded as grown-up enough to take on the responsibility for themselves of coming to worship God and obeying his laws. They do this at a ceremony in which they become a 'Son of the Commandment' or Bar Mitzvah. So, for Jesus, although a year younger, this must have been a time when he would be thinking of his life ahead – and this Passover would have been a special time.

The festival went on for a week, but **people were only obliged to stay for the first 2 days.** After that, for reasons of work, many will have returned – which is what, I suspect, Joseph and Mary did, along with their family and friends.

But **during those extra days** the learned men in Jerusalem, the teachers of the Law, would hold **a sort of open-air school** in the courtyard of the Temple, between the times of the morning and evening sacrifices. Here youngsters, as well as grown-ups, could sit on the ground, listen – answer and ask questions – which was the normal way of learning in those days.

Here was a better opportunity to learn than could be had at the village synagogue in Nazareth – and **the boy Jesus was obviously keen to take advantage of it.** Clearly however, there had been a lack of communication between Jesus and his parents – for they set off on the return journey **without checking** that he was with them. This shows they put a great deal of confidence in Jesus, young as he was, knowing he was always where he ought to be.

It was probably the custom **then**, as it was **later**, for the women and younger children to travel ahead of the men and older boys. **Each of Jesus' parents must have assumed that he was with the others!**

Until they all come together at the agreed overnight accommodation. **Consternation!** They probably blamed each other for losing the boy – we can just picture the scene! – after searching among their friends and kinsfolk.

Next day they hurry back to Jerusalem, no doubt enquiring as they go. Another anxious night – and then a search through the city, their fear giving way to despair and dread. By the time they find him, they must have been out of their mind! **Have you ever felt guilty? Sick with it? Has that emotion helped you cope?** More likely we find ourselves blaming others, unable to think clearly.

It isn't surprising, when they do find Jesus, that **Mary drops all her load of guilt and anguish on him**, Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been so worried, searching for you.

What is Jesus' reaction? It's **not** to defend himself, **not** to offer a lame excuse (*I thought I'd told you*). **He accepts his own responsibility for being there.**

For Jesus is so **trustful** of God's care for him, and unaware of **their anxiety and distrust** – that he can only express his amazement. Searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be at my Father's? They **should** have realised he would be in the Temple, busy about his Father's concerns.

Already Jesus knows **who he really is – his Father's son**. His **real** Father, whom, I'm sure, he already knows so intimately that he calls him 'Abba' – the word Jewish children call their earthly fathers. No-one before had been so close to God as this. But later, he will introduce to his disciples this way of talking to God and trusting him.

And Jesus knows already **the purpose of his life – to do his Father's will**, to be doing all his Father wants him to do.

As he would say later, "I do nothing on my own .. I always do what pleases him." (*John 8:28-29*) That is why he said to his parents, "**I had to be about my Father's business**" (*Luke 2:49 footnote*). And one day he told others, "By myself I can do nothing, for I seek not to

please myself but him who sent me." (*John 5:30*) Or, as he told the devil, quoting God's command to us all, "**Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.**" (*Luke 4:8, Deut 6:13; 13:3-4*) What a challenge to each one of us!

The ultimate purpose of Jesus' life was **to lay it down, so that we might have everlasting life**. "I lay down my life for my sheep. ..it's the reason my Father loves me.. No-one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord ..This command I received from my Father." (*John 10:15,17,18*) At the end of his life, Jesus cries out, "It is **finished.**" That word is identical to '**completed**' in 19:28 and is used in 17:4 "I have brought you glory by **completing** the work you gave me to do." It was a triumphant word, "**It is accomplished!**"

Returning to Jesus, the boy of 12, we know there had to be a further time of preparation, growing up into the maturity of a man. Therefore, "he went down to Nazareth with his parents and was obedient to them .. and he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (*Luke 2:51,52*) And as was customary, he learnt his earthly father's trade, and became a carpenter. **Until the age of 30**, when he heard John the Baptist's call, "Prepare the way for the Lord .. and all mankind will see God's salvation." (*Luke 3:4,6; Isa 40:3-5*) And went to be baptised.

No doubt those years of preparation were ones when **God's words** were his top spiritual priority, learning all he needed, to accomplish his Father's purpose for his later work of ministry, and **living them out** in that home, the true pattern of life God wants for every one of us. Loving his brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours, with great integrity and compassion, experiencing all our joys and sorrows at first hand. Seeing around him, too, the natural world, his Father's handiwork, that he used so well, to illustrate his teaching!

What are we to learn from this account of Jesus the boy? In the first place, have we seen **who we are in his Father's sight?** We are **not** his sons and daughters if we are keeping him at arms-length! We need his forgiveness for our avoiding him, not believing in him, not wanting to get to know him personally – let alone asking him into our lives as our Saviour and Lord! Are we aware that God is **calling us**

to become his sons and daughters, because he loves us? (2
Corinthians 6:17-18; 1 John 3:1-2)

Then, have **we**, each of us, realised that **he wants us to respond to his purpose for our lives?** When we avoid him, it's because we live for ourselves, not for him! We resent any idea of his telling us what to do with **our** lives, we want independence, going our own way! But he made us, he longs for us to realise that his intention is that **we should experience his love, know that his way alone can fulfil our lives**, and give us true peace and joy. His purpose is that we should receive his eternal life – otherwise our choice will end in death and our eternal loss.

As an old man, looking back on my life, I do not regret for a moment giving him my life, and trusting him. But I do regret when I have made my own choices, relying on my own wisdom. Overall, however, I know that he has led me and been with me through pain and sorrow, as well as in joys and happiness. So, I ask every one of you to **consider seriously where you are now** and respond wholeheartedly to him.