**Lost, or Just Searching**

For the last three Sundays we have been celebrating Prayer for Christian Unity, and learning and acknowledging the harsher side of humanity, through the story telling and recognition of the Holocaust, during the second world war. Today we shift to a Gospel story of Jesus as a young boy, and it looks like he is preparing for his future in ministry,

Our readings today have messages we should take note of, both as young people, and as adults. Our first reading is from the Book of Proverbs, which is a collection of moral and religious teachings in the form of sayings and proverbs (from Introduction to Proverbs, in the Good News Bible, Giant Print, Thomas Nelson, Publishers, New York., 1976, P. 888) This collection tells us how we are to be with one another, “about what the wise person will do in certain situations”. Some of the proverbs deal with family relations, and others deal with business dealings, matters of etiquette in social relationships, and other Proverbs that deal with the need for self-control, humility, patience, respect for the poor and loyalty to friends. Although in this reading the teacher is speaking to young men, these words and their meanings are also relevant for women as well.

We are being told not to forget the teachings we receive about how we are to be with all of creation. If we make loyalty and faithfulness the way we live, an essence of who we are, we will please God and the people around us. We will be trusted. We are to honour God and turn away from evil. Jesus was loyal and faithful foremost to God, also to his friends. And when we think about it, Jesus through his faithfulness is also loyal to the stranger. Through his faith and actions it became widespread knowledge that Jesus was a man to be trusted.

In the Gospel reading we hear the story of Jesus and his parents, along with friends and family, traveling to Jerusalem for Passover. Back in those times they didn’t worry about children wondering off because the family and people of the village looked out for their neighbours and their neighbour’s kids. So, on the trip home Jesus wasn’t presumed missing until they got home, and he was nowhere to be found. I am quite sure that most of us can relate to the panic parents experience when we lose sight of our children these days, even for just a few minutes.

Can you imagine the panic Mary and Joseph were in, especially by day three? Even though there were great expectations for Jesus’ future, we need to remember he was just a young boy, making young boy mistakes. Jesus just assumed his parents would know he was in the house of God, with the teachers.

I can relate to the panic Mary and Joseph may have been feeling. When my son John was younger, about 45 years ago, and when he was more active, I thought nothing of him being gone most of the day, because I knew who he was hanging around with, his usual play areas, and the areas he felt comfortable traveling in. I also knew and trusted my neighbours and we watched out for each other’s children to make sure they were safe and not doing things they shouldn’t. Then one day, John didn’t come home when expected. After about four hours of searching in the places I thought he would be I really started panicking. Finally, out of desperation I phoned his father’s house, they lived near us at the time, to ask them to help me search for him. Low and behold he was there at their place. My first instinct was to start yelling at John and his Dad but I kept my cool and asked why the adults hadn’t called me to let me know he was with them, and they said that John told them I would know where he was. When I asked John why he hadn’t told me he would be going to his Dad’s he said he thought I would just know he was with his Dad. Like Jesus, John, in his childish way of thinking, thought his mother would just know he would be where he was safe. After this we, the parents, would call to let each other know where the kids where when they were at our respective places

This Gospel reading also gives us a small snapshot of Jesus and who he was to become. That even at his young age he was also questioning things that adults didn’t have the courage to. In this reading we hear that Jesus isn’t just sitting there listening to the Temple teachers, he was questioning and challenging things like religious practices and traditions. Jesus seemed to be holding his own with the teachers. How would we feel today to have children challenging our religious and traditional practices and beliefs? Open to it I hope.

Through his questioning and challenging Jesus grew up believing that God was for ALL PEOPLE, not just for the Jewish population. Jesus didn’t just minister to the healthy, wealthy and wise, he served all, gentiles, Jews, the unclean, the sick and the lame. Jesus grew up to push the boundaries of his faith, so that it was more inclusive of different peoples. We need to pushing boundaries on all kinds of issues within and outside our church. We need to have the courage to challenge injustice, just as Jesus did.

We need to create the spaces for our young people to learn about loyalty and faithfulness, to be able grow, gain the courage to ask the hard but important questions that we all need to struggle with, but that we may be afraid to ask. How do we help our children be true followers of Jesus?

Our children are not just our future, they are our here and now. They know more than we give them credit for. They have a lot to teach us. I would just ask that our young people let their parents know where they are. But, we need to learn to listen to our young people, you’d be surprised what we might learn from them. And with that may all God’s children say Amen!