



Week 10: Joy in Finding Jesus

Read

- John 16:22 – “So you are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”
- St. Therese of Lisieux – “There is no Joy like that known by the truly poor in spirit.”
- Genesis 21:6 – “Sarah then said, ‘The Lord has given me cause to laugh, and all who hear of it will laugh with me.’”
- Luke 15: 8-9 – “What woman having 10 coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.’”

Pray

Choose just one of the passages listed above (or perhaps an alternate passage about obedience with which you are familiar). If you are inclined to do so, look-up the passage and read it in context. Or if not, sit quietly with your passage and see if new meaning or inspiration comes from it. Pray one decade of the Rosary, focusing on the mystery of finding Jesus in the Temple and the fruit of Joy when He is found. Ask to receive this spiritual gift. You can use *The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple* (attached) if needed, or enter into your own reflection. Look for and experience instances of joy. Does the passage you chose give new light to your experience?

Enter into the Scene

Seek to enter more deeply into the experience of Mary and Joseph. You have traveled by foot to the temple for the Passover celebration. Perhaps you are in a large caravan on people, some known to you, others unknown. Everything about your circumstances is different from your usual routine. Perhaps everything and everyone around you is busy; you are busy too. Passover concludes and you are tired and ready to return home. You begin your journey home, walking for an entire day, assuming that Jesus is with you. As evening falls, you begin searching – Where is He? When was the last time you saw Him? Encounter Mary and Joseph here, where perfect faith intersects with anxiety (Luke 2:48) and loss. For 3 days they search. What do they fear or even presume during these 3 days of absence? If you are a parent, imagine losing your own child for 3 days. Pause with this loss.

Now imagine the joy (but perhaps other feelings too – what are these?) that Mary and Joseph feel when they find Jesus, not only well and safe, but thriving and learning. You question Him and He responds, but you do not fully understand His explanation. Why did He stay behind? Why did He leave you to worry? Has your relationship with Him changed due to the absence?

Reflect

1. Have you ever felt like you “lost” Jesus in your daily life? What was this experience like? How long did the season last, or is it still ongoing? In retrospect, do you see a purpose or cause for the “absence?” If the season of distance you experienced is over and you feel Jesus near again, what was your experience like in “finding” Him?
2. Do you think that the experience of losing and finding Jesus will prepare Mary for future events? How? Has God ever used smaller circumstances foreshadow prepare you for future events? When?
3. How does loss relate to joy?



Reflection: *The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple*

So little is known about Your early life, about what events and intricacies spanned the time between Your infancy and public ministry. The fragments of Your early life mentioned in scripture are illusive. Yet, the sparse details call me to wonder about Your youth rather than just skip over it.

Just shortly after Your presentation, an angel appeared to Joseph and warned him not to return home, but to flee to Egypt and wait there. I encounter Your Mother here, journeying again. As she traveled to visit Elizabeth in Judah and to Your nativity in Bethlehem, now she journeys with You and Joseph to live your early years in Egypt. It is as if something about Her love for You propels her to move forward. I imagine Her journey with You tucked safely beneath the fabric of her mantle.

Mary is both active and contemplative. Externally She is active, moving forward in the will of Her Heavenly Father through the direction of Her earthly spouse. And internally She is fully consumed with You, tucked quietly beneath the folds of Her garment, cradled against Her breast and heart as She journeys.

Your Holy Family lives the earliest months and years of Your life as immigrants, as refugees fleeing political oppression, as people who have left the familiarity of their homeland to live on foreign soil. You grow here, in this imperfect context. You grow as You were born, in humble, less than average conditions. You, God incarnate, allow Yourself to grow. Rather than assume or impose, You grow.

In some way, Your parents must foster Your growth. This remains a mystery to those of us who are looking in on Your early years. In what ways did Your parents teach You, or nurture You? In what ways did You teach and nurture them? The scriptures tell us that You were obedient to Your parents (Lk 2:51). So in that respect, Your family structure could not have been totally unlike that of other families. And yet, how very different you three must have been.

At some point, Your exile is complete. An angel appears to Joseph in a dream and Your family is lead back to Nazareth. You journey again, out of Egypt to the land of promise. You continue to grow, to “advance in wisdom and age” (Lk 2:52) under the care of Your parents.

For the Feast of the Passover You travel, this year as every year before, to the temple. You are 12, not yet an adult, but no longer a child. The celebration reaches completion, and Your family and friends depart. But You stay; You linger behind in the house of Your Father.

After an entire day of travel, Your parents realize that You are not with them, You are not with their caravan of friends and fellow travelers. “With great anxiety,” Your Mother searches for You. Perhaps She longs for the days of travel when You were still tucked beneath Her cloak. Perhaps She second guesses Herself, or fears that She made some mistake to have lost You. For 3 days, as the 3 days of Your death, She is devastated and lost without You.

Your parents find You, exactly where they left You, where they offered You in Your infancy – in the temple, on the (metaphoric) alter of Your Father’s will. You are teaching, but also being taught – asking and answering questions. You, the God who allows yourself to grow, also allows yourself to learn and be taught.

When Your parents come to You, they are astonished and perplexed. Your Mother says, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for You with great anxiety.” You reply to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” They do not understand You or Your meaning, at least not as fully as they wish. They will learn and grow with You.

Jesus, with great anxiety I seek You. How I wish I could keep You always safely tucked beneath my cloak and beside my heart. But that is not always Your will. I do not always understand You, or Your purpose, but I long to grow and learn beside You, humbly, as You grow and learn into adulthood.