

Woops! We've lost the Son of God!

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It was an annual event; Mary and Joseph made the same journey each year to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. Perhaps previous years had been uneventful, since there was no significant event causing it to be recorded in Scripture. Yet, on this twelfth year, something highly significant happens; the boy Jesus goes missing.

After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. (Luke 2:43&44)

To our modern way of thinking this seems very strange. Why did it take a whole day for Mary and Joseph to notice that Jesus was missing? Well, the culture of the day was very different to our own. The journey to the feast would have been one that whole families and whole communities would make together. Families, friends and neighbours would watch out for each other, take care of each other and watch over each other's children. No mobile phones, no emails, no satellite tracking devices; just communities and families watching over each other.

And so, Mary and Joseph assumed that Jesus was "in their company".

So at what point did that twinge of unease stir in Mary's heart, for we know that by the time she found her son she was anxious. **Where's Jesus?** At what point did Joseph become concerned? **Where's Jesus?** Scanning the horizon for familiar faces is Jesus there? **No!**

Looking behind, searching frantically for family members. Is Jesus there? **No!**

Anxiety starts to rise.....

Let's pause for a moment and take a look back to an event which happened twelve years previously.

Mary, an ordinary young woman who loved God, was visited by the angel Gabriel who announced that he had been sent by God to bring her good news:

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1: 29-35)

Mary's humble response was to submit totally to God's will:

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:38)

Joseph, a young man betrothed in marriage to Mary, had his world turned upside down when he discovered that his young fiancée was with child:

Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matthew 1:19)

Subsequently his fears and doubts fell away when the Angel visited him, alleviating his fears:

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20)

And so, Mary and Joseph's willingness to submit to the will of their Heavenly Father opened the way for God's redemptive plan for mankind to be fulfilled. This humble young woman, walking in obedience to God, is chosen to bring the Messiah into the world; the Son of God who will save His people from their sins. This young couple were chosen to nurture Him through His formative years. When danger threatened the baby's safety they fled, in obedience to the warning Joseph received in a dream. They gave up the security of familiar surroundings to live in exile in order to preserve the life of this precious child.

Now, twelve years on, they have lost Jesus; they've lost the Son of God!

As God watched this scenario unfold what would He have seen? A distraught young couple who perhaps felt they'd failed on so many levels; failed their God, failed their Son, failed each other and failed themselves. At the same time He would have seen His precious Son in His Father's house, learning from the scholars. God saw Jesus; He knew where He was. Like a hurricane over a millpond, Mary and Joseph's anxiety and worry would not so much have caused a ripple of surprise to God. Nothing catches Him unawares, nothing fazes Him. He saw Jesus; He watched over Him, He protected Him.

This temporary situation, huge as it must have appeared to Mary and Joseph, could not thwart the plans of God.

And so it is in our lives.

Has God entrusted something to you; perhaps a gifting, a ministry, a family or a friendship? Have you looked back, as Mary and Joseph did, and come to a realisation that you've lost something valuable? Have the storms of life left you feeling that you've lost that which once made your heart sing? Have circumstances, or your own choices, left you feeling that you've let go of something very precious? Maybe you didn't even notice it happening but now you ache to rediscover what you once had. Perhaps this is affecting your walk with God; perhaps you feel you can't look Him in the eye because of your shame or guilt?

Well remember, my friend! Nothing can thwart the plans and purposes of God. Though at times we may wander in the desert God is always so gracious. I encourage you, do as Mary and Joseph did...turn back and search for Jesus. Seek Him in repentance and He will be found. He will forgive you, restore you and set you back on the straight path as you seek His plans and purposes for your life once more.

God is good, all the time.