

Thought for the Day

Thought for the day is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.

For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>

Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)

Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.

Sunday 3 January

Luke 2.41-end

When someone turns out to be an extraordinary person in adulthood, it is natural to wonder how this began and what kind of child they were; when did the signs of being special emerge?

This certainly happened with Jesus and there were other stories of his childhood, much less credible and less restrained than this one, which are found in the non-canonical gospels, deemed inauthentic and excluded from the New Testament.

Luke's account here is thought to be the occasion of Jesus' Bar Mitzvah, the ceremony of becoming an adult in the faith, when a boy had to read the Scriptures in Hebrew in public. The discussion Jesus was engaged in with the rabbis would have followed naturally from this occasion as they debated among themselves the interpretation of a passage.

For Luke the event foreshadows much of what follows and that is perhaps why he includes it in his gospel, the only one to give us this story.

We see here Jesus' unusual insight into Scripture, which he later taught with authority and not as the scribes. We see his sense of vocation developing as he is drawn to the temple and stays there. In the phrase 'my Father's house' we see the beginning of a sense of special relationship to God the Father. And as Luke relates that Mary and Joseph found him after 3 days, he echoes deliberately the 3 days between death and resurrection. Lost and found. Dead and alive; yet all the time following the purposes of God.

Luke's conclusion, Jesus increased in wisdom, doesn't just mean that he grew up and learnt stuff. It connects Jesus with the Wisdom tradition in the OT and with the figure of Wisdom personified in a number of passages. Wisdom was with God in the very beginning of creation; Wisdom was with Israel, revealing God to them, leading them through the desert. Wisdom dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem. Wisdom spoke through the prophets. By referring to this concept, Luke was saying something very close to John's prologue about the logos, the Word of God. The Wisdom of God dwelt in Jesus of Nazareth, and it was seen that day in the temple, as later in the adult teacher.

We find that phrase 'my Father's house' in another place too. In the gospel of John, at the point where Jesus is preparing the disciples for his death. Everyone who has been to a church funeral will have heard this.

'In my Father's house there are many rooms' he said. 'I go to prepare a place for you.' Not: I go to rest after my hard labours; not: I go to be enthroned in glory. Not: I go to resume my place of privilege by the Father's side. No. I go to prepare for you. To get your room ready for when you arrive, to welcome you into my Father's house.

Wisdom focusses not on self but on others. Wisdom gives rather than takes. Wisdom is true humility. Wisdom is the nature of God, poured out for others, for us. Wisdom welcomes her children into the Father's house.

May that thought give strength and comfort to all who are grieving this Christmas season.

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort,
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*