

The Questing Heart

Luke 2:41-52 (Jesus at the Temple)

The Questing Heart

Asking is not Doubt. Asking is humility. Questions lead to a sharp mind a tender heart. It does not allow simple assumptions. Questions are about challenging yourself not others. Some people can handle that. Some people can't.

But Jesus was always challenging people about their conceptions. He challenged them about what life was really about. These are not questions we are often comfortable with. Sometimes we are afraid of the answers we get.

Sometimes we settle for what others say. We don't want to rock the foundations of our understanding. But this is exactly what Jesus came to do.

Jesus was not only fully God, but also fully man. And his humanity, we observe, meant that he had to learn. Jesus was voracious in his learning. Even though we have this glimpse of him at the age of 12 I'm sure he didn't stop learning there. We are told that he grew in wisdom and favour of God and people. (v.52)

But how does one grow in wisdom? And how does one grow in grace (relationships with others)? By exactly what Jesus did.

First, he was in the temple courts – sitting with the teachers, listening and asking questions. (v.46) He was inquisitive. Willing to ask, challenge, answer, explore, seek, revise, be corrected and to discover. Maturity comes with being a student first. How can we disciple others if we are not disciple ourselves? At no point does our learning stop unless we become proud. Pride prevents learning and growth. But humility allows us to discover. In other words, Jesus, at the age of thirty was able to teach because he had learned. He was prepared to teach and

what he taught stood heads and shoulders above all other teachers not only of his time but even ours.

There is a second key to maturity and growth and it is this – Jesus knew exactly who he was. He says to Mary and Joseph, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” It was not a slight to Joseph, although I do wonder what Joseph thought, but it was a clear acknowledgement of his relationship with Yahweh. The depth of that relationship is also very clear because he did not say “I need to be in God’s house,” he said “My Father’s house.” I must assume by this point that Joseph and Mary had told Jesus of his birth, of the angels, of all those circumstances, not that they understood entirely. Jesus was secure in his relationship with God the Father. This in fact is something that allows his inquisitiveness.

We may be afraid to ask because we are insecure. Afraid about what we might find out. That God is not who we thought he was – that we are wrong about him or about ourselves. Jesus was not afraid to ask because he had one fundamental understanding that provided the foundation of all he asked. He knew that the Father loved him. That love does not mislead. Jesus himself reflects this same love and it is his message to us since he and the Father are one. It is the fundamental assumption of the truly Christian life. “Jesus Loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” And so it is that relationship that allows growth, exploration, resilience, wisdom, grace and maturity.

Not all of us come from a place of love. Some of our families are difficult. Deep fears and insecurities abide in us. We have trouble when our thoughts are challenged. We are stunted in our ability to grow. It is Jesus who invited us to the Father who loves us, who reveals this same love in his sacrifice on the cross. No matter what you have done, whatever was done to you, you are loved. You are loved. You are loved. This reality, whether you choose to believe it or not is the foundation of living with God. It is not a life lived blindly but one that is full of surprises and joy if you are really willing to follow.

When you live a life that is open to God, engaging in questions and exploration you may not always have answers that you can understand. At those points, you have to simply live with God in the mystery that is. You may not have all the answers but you will always have him.

One of the ways in which we live this out is the way we encounter those who are not followers of Jesus. In my own life, I have started a conversation with Greg, a Jehovah's Witness. I sit with, listen and ask questions of him. Sometimes he asks me questions. I do feel sad however when he tells me things which he believes with his whole heart but I know are not true. He believes that Jesus came back in 1914, a convoluted calculation that pastes bits and pieces of Scripture together in a manner that would not stand any serious scholarly test. He believes that Jesus is not God but in fact the archangel Michael, another concept that the Scriptures cannot hold together. He does not know if he will enter into heaven or the new earth according to his beliefs because his faith is based on merit, not grace. We are alike in that we don't think people should live by tradition but according to the word of God, but I don't know if he is mindful of the reality that he is already living by a particular tradition – that of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Will he be open to really asking questions and discovering the truth? Am I?

I have always found the most profound prayer to be, "Show me who you truly are, Lord, not who I think you are or want you to be. Let me become who I am meant to be in this lifetime. Have mercy upon me."

So what does it mean for you to be a Christian? And what does it mean for us to be the church? Are you ready to ask those questions? The way God answers you, if you know how to listen, will provide you with the direction of your life.

Question: What helps you remain open and inquisitive towards God?