

We all know the things our moms have told us over the years. What are some of the things your Mom said? (Congregation Response) "If you want to act like a child, I'll treat you like one." "One day you'll thank me." And "Because I said so, that's why!"

But have you ever thought about things Moms in the Bible may have said to their kids? "David! I told you not to play in the house with that sling! Go practice your harp. We pay good money for those lessons!" "Noah! No, you can't keep them! I told you, don't bring home any more strays!" or "Jesus! What do you think, you were born in a barn?"

Today we thank all of the Moms here or watching online and the people who have stepped in to serve as our Moms. They may be grandparents, foster parents, adopted parents, or older siblings. We also think about the women who have wanted, but not been able to have children of their own and ask the Lord to be with them.

One thing we know for sure, no two families are alike. They are all different. Some are bigger, others smaller. Some are more traditional, others are blended. Some have both parents; others are single parent homes. Some have only boys, others only have girls, and still others have both.

We may have hopes and dreams for a perfect family, but that never happens. It doesn't happen on TV or in the movies. It certainly didn't happen in the Bible. The Bible tells us about real families struggles. Adam and Eve were the first parents. One of their sons killed another. Abraham and Sara could not have any children. They made things worse by trying to have a slave girl serve as a surrogate mom. Mary and Joseph left 12 years old Jesus behind in Jerusalem.

Can you imagine the panic Mary went through after they discovered that they had left Jesus behind? Mary, Joseph and their family were returning to Galilee after celebrating the Passover. They assumed that Jesus was travelling with their friends and extended family. But at the end of the first day of the trip home, Jesus was not in the group. Think about the shame Mary felt. Talk about a crisis. The Son of God was missing, and Mary had no idea where he was.

Think about Mary's prayers that night. "Dear God. You know your Son, the one you gave to us to raise and take care of. In case you haven't noticed, He is missing. We lost Him. We thought He was travelling with our group, but we can't find him. I'm so sorry. Help us find Him? Keep Him safe until we can find Him? I promise we will never forget about Jesus again."

Have we every left Jesus behind? Have you ever gotten so busy doing whatever it is you think you have to do that you've forgotten about Jesus? Do you walk through life with Him every day or do you check your faith at the church door, hoping it will be there the next time you walk through the doors or tune in for an online service? It is easy to become so busy that we don't have or make time for Jesus in our daily lives. The good news is that Jesus seeks us out when we are lost. He wants us to search for those who seem to have lost their way or forgotten about Him.

After discovering that Jesus was missing and he was not with family or friends, Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem. They had already travelled for a day on their way home. It would take them another day to get back to Jerusalem. On the third day they found Jesus in the temple courts listening to and questioning the teachers. Mary's fears and frustration came to the surface when she asked, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere." (vs. 48)

You'd expect Mary to say something like that. But you might not expect Jesus' response. "But why did you need to search? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?" (vs. 49) Mary and Joseph didn't understand what Jesus' meant. They had a lot to learn about Jesus.

Mary received a visit from the Angel Gabriel telling her she had been chosen to be the mother of the "Son of God." Joseph was told that it was ok to get married to Mary because she was telling the truth about her unborn child. Mary and Joseph knew Jesus was someone special, but they had a lot to learn about Him. Jesus' words to them in the temple were part of that learning curve.

Jesus is the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity. The temple in Jerusalem was the symbolic home of God the Father on earth. But as we know, God cannot be confined to a temple built by humans. The temple was a place to worship God the Father and to learn more about having faith in Him. That is why the temple was important to twelve year old Jesus.

Jesus' family is much bigger than Mary, Joseph, James, and the other siblings. There was a time during Jesus' ministry when His family wanted to see Him. Jesus said, "Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!" (Matthew 12:50) As important as our biological or adopted families may be, the most important family for all of us is the family of God.

Just like for Jesus, the Father's family is our forever family. The Father's house can be any place where we make a personal connection with our Creator, Redeemer, where we grow in faith and love. The "Father's family" is a place for listening, learning, growing, and deepening our relationship with God and with one another.

The Gospel of Luke tells us that after Jesus returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph that "Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people." (vs. 52) Our Christian homes should be places of preparation for life in God's family. Moms and Dads need to think about this when they are raising their children. It is too easy to focus on giving our kids the things or the experiences they want. But that is not enough. We need to help our children to grow up like Jesus, to learn to make wise, God pleasing choices. We need to help them grow physically and emotionally, but also to grow in their relationship with God the Father. We need to help them learn to love, care for, forgive and serve one another.

We can't control everything that happens, but we can learn from them. Mary treasured her experience with Jesus. With the Lord's help we can learn to let go, to have faith, to trust God and to listen to one another. Doing those things will help our families work better together.