**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**15th January 2023**

**Luke 2:41-52**

**Gathering**

The temple is a strange place

All holy places are

The thin meeting place

Where heaven seems closer

Where there is a concentration of God

In the leaders and elders and wise ones of faith

Mouthpieces for the Holy One

Yet

And yet

Who is the expert on God

Who dares suggest they know

Anything

Such sacred words

Are filled with our human constructs and prejudices

Yet perhaps it is not depth of intelligence

But honest wisdom

That God cannot be known

That makes any holy place

Tangible and overflowing with God

**Welcome**

Hello, I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and thank you for your invitation to invite us into this worship space. Let us travel together again as we find ourselves running after Jesus, along with his mother and father, after the most anxious of searches for the boy of 12, missing from the group of travellers. He’s only gone and stayed behind in the temple. How did he think he was going to get back home? Had he any thought about his parents, and what of those words of his mother, after finding him, in the temple? Did she remember the other boy, generations past, whose home became the temple? Is that what she was pondering? Let us ponder together in worship.

**Prayer**

Holy God

Found in our sacred places

May we meet you again

Wherever those places may be

Soaring temples

Lighted stained glass

Holy sanctuaries

Bedsides of friends

Beauty of creation

Places of conversation

Forgiving places

Trysting places

Eternal places

So many

For so many people

Holy God

May we meet you

In this space

With all these others

A sacred community

Filled with wonder

And possibility

And certainty

And doubt

An honest faith

May we in such a place

Touch

Breathe

Pause

And wait

Without words

Or lists

Or confession

Just presence

(Pause)

Living presence

(Pause)

Holy presence

(Pause)

And bring what we do not understand

As our gift

And for the freedom of that

That frees you

As much as us

Untied

Unbound

By tradition and culture

(Pause)

Holy God

In the wonder

In the exploring

In the questioning

In the pondering

May we meet

So be it

Amen

**Reading Background**

This is the only story we have of Jesus as a boy. He’s 12. He is about to have his bar mitzvah. He’s coming of age. An adult. He’s not the western idea of a 12 year old boy only starting secondary school. His culture is turning him into an adult.

Yet here he is, lost. Lost in his parents’ eyes. Not in his. Is that maturity or thoughtlessness, or just selfishness? Jesus? He’s allowed to be human, so let us see how any of these fit in our own mind’s eye when we picture this story of Jesus in the temple.

**Reading**

**41**Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. **42**And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. **43**When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. **44**Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. **45**When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. **46**After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **47**And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. **48**When his parents[a] saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, ‘Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.’ **49**He said to them, ‘Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ **50**But they did not understand what he said to them. **51**Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

**52**And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

**Reflection**

I am a bit reluctant to let my daughter go into the world… It just seems too soon… she’s finishing university… she doesn’t stay at home… but letting her go and be an adult?… too soon… And it isn’t that nice a world out there anyway…

I suppose all parents feel like that… You think you’ve managed to do a fairly decent job without any instructions in bringing them up… but now they can vote and get married and pay tax and drive… but why would they want to leave and find their way in the world…

For a whole lot of reasons obviously… and I know those reasons perfectly well… but why can’t they see that as they make decisions I used to be involved with… (well actually I was never involved…Rather I was just informed)… I’m losing her a bit…

I hope some of that is how Mary feels… having had a desperate journey back to Jerusalem and finding Jesus in the temple… Formally he is an adult… and the story tells us he can hold his own with the rabbi’s… but still… might she want to hold on to him a little longer?…

The language used for Mary’s feelings changes with whichever translation you use… She treasured all these things… kept all these things… stored… cherished… bore them… pondered…

There is part of me… and there isn’t a great deal of evidence for this… but let’s play with it a little… that this was a moment when she recognised all that the messenger announced to her… was coming true…

Now there are two different ways of responding to that… One is with pride… Her son is debating… even at 12… with the priests and religion scholars…

But there is also… and perhaps at the same time… the worry… that these things are ACTUALLY coming true… what does that mean?…

There is another story of a boy in a temple… His name is Samuel… and his mother, Hannah… was barren… but after promising to dedicate her son to the temple if she was able to bear a child… she became pregnant… and when the child was born she did exactly that… and lost him…

And I wonder if Mary knew that story… why wouldn’t she… and she sees what happens… and wants to hold onto him as she could…

Luke sees a connection as the song Mary sings is based on the song Hannah sings for her son… so these two stories are connected… I want to ponder… that they are connected not by the easy pride of a son dedicated to life with God… but because the mothers don’t want to lose their sons…

Mary… becomes more human… not all meek and mild… with a fierce love… I may be completely wrong… I often am… but it offers the perspective from a parent… who doesn’t want to let go of their child…

Did she worry she was already losing him?… and it was too soon… I genuinely don’t know… maybe I’m stretching it too much…

There is no great moral insight here… just an acknowledgement that these are real people… not idealised… that are involved with the gospel… and when we treat them as if everything was okay… then maybe the gospel loses something profound…

This is the story of people… trying to make sense of promise… and what God means… and we share that space with them… It is still a struggle… but we have Mary to accompany us… and ground us… in the mess of knowing what she needs to let go of… but wants to hold on to a little longer… we’re not a stranger to that in the church… the future is difficult… and faith in that future isn’t easy or straightforward… its full of emotion and memory of what is… and wondering what is yet to be…

Mary is caught in the middle of that… and it is okay to find ourselves there with her… it is an honest place… let us not deny ourselves the humanity of that… it is a place where faith means something…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

In every place

May we find you

Part of our world

In the crossing point

Of what is

And what is yet to be

We pray for those places

In conflict

And long for what peace will bring

In Ukraine and Syria

In Afghanistan and Tigray

Those places in hunger

And long for what harvest can bring

In Somalia and Pakistan

Those places facing climate change

And what caring for creation can bring

In California and Europe

Bangladesh and Australia

Those places in crises

And what new vision can bring

In our National Health Service and society

In our church and communities

God

May we find you

Part of the world

In the crossing point

Between present and future

And the choices we make

And the way of living we choose

And the priorities we give

And the neighbours we love

And in that place too

We think especially of those closest to us

Family and friends

Those grieving at this time

And those who are ill

Those worried and anxious

Those tired and those caring

So be it

Amen

**Epilogue**

Maybe we are given an opportunity to accompany Mary this week… in her pondering… as she reflects… treasures what all this means… There is a moment of recalibration here… as she has an insight into what her son is becoming…

It is a faithful moment when we can do that… and Mary invites us into a space that is reflective and contemplative… not one with answers… but to ponder what it means… God’s place and purpose in our lives… Mary almost summons us to sit and wonder… and she asks us… Will you keep me company…

There doesn’t seem to be much admiration for thinking these days… taking the long view… Too many busy immediate reactions… reactions and opinions that haven’t had time to steep and be considered fully… quickly jumping to conclusions…

Mary says to us… Pause… ponder… reflect… contemplate… It will better shape our futures… so I invite you to do so… today… and throughout the week…

**Benediction**