

I like to read a good book. I get immersed in a story, in a life carried to me by words. I can't put it down. Like an addict I want more and more, even as it is ended I want more still. I like a good book.

I prepared for this morning earlier this week. I read through the lessons, but with the first lesson I could not stop, I could not leave Joseph hanging but needed to stay with him to the end of the story. O, I knew the story before. I remember my mother reading to us every morning before school as we awaited the school bus. She read from a devotional book entitled at Jesus Feet. The book told the stories of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of Moses and Joshua and David and Solomon, of Jesus and Peter and Paul. But most of all the book told the story of Joseph. Day after day after day we would follow Joseph from the gift of the coat of many colors, to dreams of his authority over his father and brothers, through the trechery of his brothers and his being sold into slavery, through the time in potiphars house, and the evil of potiphars wife, to the time in prison and the interpetation of dreams and on through the rest of the story. I loved the story of Jospheh, the story of the one who no matter what held to his love for his God and his family. Though mistreated Joseph's heart remained pure and forgiving. This last week as I was again caught up in this story I knew I still loved this story, it is a part of me.

Growing up, I knew the story of Joseph was my story. I was Joseph. Two weeks ago I heard another pastor talk about Joseph as the ideal Hebrew, as the man every Hebrew boy was trained to be. So I was trained, this story was sunk deep into my being through its being told me over and over.

~~that I did not know what~~

But it is the Christmas season, the time to center our thoughts not on Joseph, but on Jesus. Today our gospel tells of the twelve year old Jesus, going to Jerusalem with his parents to celebrate the passover. As I have read through this text, I have realized how deeply engrained this story is within me also. In Sunday School, in sermons, in devotions this story of

Jesus remaining behind became my story. But as well as I know it and feel it, it was not until this last week that I realized one thing that could be true. Jesus might have been discussing the story of Joseph. Who knows? Jesus, God's own son may have been filling his heart with the same story that filled my heart. Surely he was taught of Moses and Jacob and Elijah and Daniel. He grew up on the same stories that I grew up on. These stories of God and man shaped and molded him just as they shaped and molded me.

I am always amazed that everyone doesn't share these stories. Some of you have grown up without Joseph and David and Peter in your hearts. Some of you have grown up without the nurture and instruction of the parables of Jesus, and stories like this one of the visit to the temple. If you are one who is without these stories in your heart I don't know what to say to you but read and read and read these stories until you know them better than you know your own stories. They will make you into the one God wills you to be.

We worry about nuclear war, and unemployment and the prices of crops. We give little thought to who tells stories to our children and grandchildren. Today the TV tells the stories that shape our children. Big Bird is substituted for Joseph, Arnold for the 12 year old Jesus. We watch Dallas instead of hearing about David and Bathsheba. It is not that the stories of the television are less wholesome than the stories of the Bible, surely they are not. When we started to read from Genesis, one church member stopped me with the question, why are we reading that smut in church. No the Biblical accounts are not more pure than what we see on TV, but the one important difference is that God is absent. The people are the same, but TV and movies gives us a world in which God is not. That makes believing harder for us and for our children.

God's own son, Jesus, sat as a student, he asked questions, he learned. You and I need to take time to do the same. God's own son took time to go to the temple, to attend synagogue. We each of us need to do the same. Jesus was subject to human institutions and customs, he ~~lived~~ did not reject

