

*"And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth [her cousin]." (Luke 1:39-40)*

*"And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance." (Luke 2:42-44)*

As I was reading the early chapters of Luke, I realized that we do not know much about our Lord's extended family and friends. If Israel of that day was anything like Haiti, all these connections were very important and life-long. In Haiti, that means the door is always open, and there is always room for one more, even if it means slim rations and a mat on the floor. It may be that God kindly covered the huge embarrassment of a Bethlehem relative who truly did not have any room for Joseph and Mary by the simple statement, "*because there was no room for them in the inn.*" No names, no condemnation, but another place for the birth (already planned) and an easy place for shepherds to find the Savior of the world. We get glimpses in the Gospels of people who made their homes available (Luke 22:10-13), but not many details. That keeps the focus on our Lord. Our service is valuable to Him, and He knows about the work that is done quietly and without recognition.

*"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil..." (Luke 4:1-13)*

Forty days is a long time. The three episodes that we know of might be said to be our Lord's response to 1 John 2:16 ("*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*"). They took very little time as we know it, a fraction of a day. What did our Lord face the rest of those days, and every day the rest of His life? There is an interesting comment later in Luke. Our Lord said, "*Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.*" (Luke 22:28) It sounds like He had temptations throughout His life, just as we do. We fail so often, but He never did. The enemy of our souls knows just when and where and how to take us down because he sees our weaknesses. He could never find a weakness in our Lord, but that did not stop him from trying, even at the cross. Our Lord was tempted in all points, just as we are (Hebrews 4:15), but without sin. When I consider that "all," it brings me to tears. In His humanity, our Lord was tempted with everything that draws humanity from God, the "*the pleasures of sin for a season*" (Hebrews 11:25), and probably in a full assault mode that we don't know because we give in so easily. If we grieve when we see someone fall, or when we fail ourselves, how does our sin affect our Lord who died to redeem us? Because He was so greatly tempted and overcame sin, He understands our need and invites us to come boldly and find the grace and mercy we so desperately need in the face of the enemy we cannot withstand by ourselves.

*"And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man..." (Luke 18:35-43)*

*"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh...For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." (2 Corinthians 12:7,8)*

We all have something we would like removed. Perhaps it is physical, something we were born with or the result of an accident or disease. We all have personal struggles, perhaps with temper, our tongues or our attitudes. How often do we want to get rid of these weaknesses because of embarrassment or inconvenience, or because we are tired of being different? God has His reasons for what is going on in our lives. In John 9:3, in talking about a man born blind, our Lord said, "*Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*" Jesus heals the man, and he, in turn, believes and worships Jesus (verse 38). Jesus heals the blind man in Luke 18, "*and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*" (verse 43). Paul is not healed, but receives a word that has brought comfort to many when the Lord says to him, "*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*" (verse 9) Paul may have thought he could serve his Lord better without whatever this problem was. Now he understands it is not God's will for it to go away, and he says, "*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*" We need to turn our gaze away from ourselves and seek to glorify God in our situation so that others will praise Him and the power of Christ will rest on us. We should not only know, but be confident that the good work He has begun in us will be complete when we see Him (Philippians 1:6).