

Luke 2:41 Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival.

Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover during the time of his ministry just as his parents had done. **John 2:13 John 6:4 John 13:1**

1. The Full Table

A. The Full Table

- i. Grateful
- ii. Intentional in connecting with each other
- iii. Making Memories
- iv. Make the most of the time

B. Every Full Table has its Empty Chairs

- i. Children can't see what their parents see. They cannot see the faces or hear the voices of those their parents knew.

2. The Empty Chair

A. Death, Choices, Distance = all of them can create a feeling of loss

- i. Distance
 - Life takes us to different places
- ii. Choices
 - For some, it may be as silly as a political disagreement. For others, it may be a dispute that hasn't been resolved, a break up of a family. Yet for others, it might be because of bad life choices that have trapped them in addiction or other serious life issues, or they are confined within the walls of a prison cell.
- iii. Death
 - In the mind of the person experiencing a loss, it can feel like the new is patched with the old; new wine pours into old family wineskins.

B. Guiding our Hearts

- i. Places not to stop at
 - Past Poisoning Present
- ii. Grief can poison the *what is* with the *what used to be*.
- iii. Over-the-Shoulder Guilt
 - This temptation sees the empty chair frowning at us, saying "Why aren't you sadder?"

C. Helpful suggestions along the journey

- i. Take one moment, one family get-together, and one holiday at a time.
- ii. Be present with those around you, and make the most of the time.
- iii. Find a way to remember and honor the loved one who is gone.
 - Celebrate the memories made, the fun we had, and the love that came from all of those moments.

- When memories chase each other around, trying to get our attention, don't chase them away.

iv. Glennon Doyle says: "Grief is love's souvenir."

v.

3. Remember, There is a Chair Filler

A. He left his chair to walk our streets to put an end to empty chairs.

- **Luke 4:16-21** "When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: *"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor..." Isaiah 61:1-3...* He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"
- **Ephesians 2:14-18** "For Christ himself has **brought peace to us**. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. **Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.** He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. **Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us."**
- **Psalms 68:6** God **places the lonely in families**; he **sets the prisoners free** and **gives them joy...**
- **Hebrews 2:14-15** Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has **the power of death**, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who **through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**

4. Conclusion

A. **Every table experiences Empty Chairs, but remember there is a Chair Filler.**

- **Rev 21:3-5** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."
 - **Matthew 26:29** I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."
- B. There is a coming day when all of us believers will sit together again, celebrating.