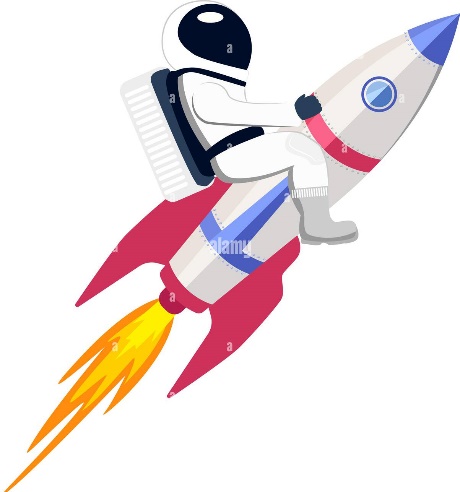
1 Samuel 2:18–20, 26 Psalm 148 Colossians 3:12–17 Luke 2:41–52

Have you ever lost someone in your family? It could be an adult gone missing for a short or long time or it would probably be a child. We have a number of lost child stories in our family. But one other of the people that I personally know with a good story is Doug and Marge Ireland’s youngest. Left in the bush after a picnic with about 12 children in a yank-tank. They realised when they got home.   
Story of Incident at Hawks Hill.

Did Jesus just drop in from Outer Space? Today’s passage from Luke gives us lots of information, not a lot of information and a lot of questions left unanswered.

So, what do we know about Jesus growing up? Just as Jesus had a sort of miraculous, sort of ordinary birth it is the same with the one growing up story to give us any clues.

What I find somewhat miraculous is that his parents didn’t miss him until next day and took 2 more days to search, backtrack and then find him in the temple. As a 12 year old it is the age of the modern Bar Mizwar it is probable that the age mentioned is significant as the age of manly responsibilities. But like all parents the worry about your children never goes away.   
It is all happening in the context of pilgrims returning from Passover, a wider group than family. People travelled in groups for safety. In that context the boy Jesus could disappear for a few days and not be noticed. Maybe there was a wider family of uncles, grandparents, cousins.   
It is not our world, but many would emphasise the importance of community beyond the family for helping young people make the transition. Perhaps it's not with temple teachers, but with someone else's mum and dad. A church community can be a place of such growth.

Was Jesus your typical adolescent – growing up and thinking more about themselves, as all children do?   
Why didn’t you call!   
What were you thinking?   
Didn’t you know how worried we would be about you?

But again, we are putting our western 20th or 21st Century values on to this. Too little information and many remaining questions remain about the parents’ attitude, statements or actions at the time. Only “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”

This lonely episode from Jesus' lost years between his birth and ministry must serve to fill a very large gap.

We ask, maybe only in our minds, about growing up. Did Jesus get into trouble, what kind of chores or responsibilities did he have, did anything change after the incident of being temporarily mislaid?

No help from the other gospels. They don’t include any stories about growing up. There basically is a 30 year gap in the record except for this story of Jesus going missing and him being found in the temple. The other 3 gospels have a more theological emphasis. The Gospel writer, Luke, thinks it is important to include it anyway. Let’s come back to ‘why’.   
I personally have been most dissatisfied. I want to know more about the human Jesus.

Maybe it is not necessary to know a little about Jesus as a somewhat normal adolescent. Even the birth story could have been excluded, as some of the gospels did. After all it is the adult Jesus who taught, was followed, did miracles, set a lifestyle example and ultimately died as a sacrifice for many that is important.

Back to the question of why to include the incident in Luke’s gospel. Jesus is presented as somewhat special in that he had amazing understanding and answers, presumably about the Hebrew texts. We have connection with a real human but now understanding some of the special features of Jesus. One is that the tradition of the scriptures was important.

Jesus’ assertion is that he was right to stay behind. He was about his Father's business. It won't wash with most parents!

Luke knows that the family was not necessarily on side during Jesus' ministry. They did not understand, or did they after the explanation? We are not told

Mary and Joseph were obeying biblical Law by fulfilling their duty to attend the temple on the Passover. This was the most important of Jewish festivals and celebrates the liberation from slavery in Egypt and the foundation story of Israel as a nation. It is also worth noting that Luke gives a central role to temple authorities as teachers, reflecting his view of the centrality of the temple and its importance., so now Jesus engages in learning in the context of biblical Law. Jesus has come to uphold the law and expand it and not demolish tradition. Rev Tevye in Fiddler on the roof would approve of the emphasis on ‘tradition’. Jesus is presented as the learner (admittedly a fast one) rather than as a teacher where we find him 2 decades later in the gospels, and also in the synagogue or temple.

Jesus would have been a human being as much like us and unlike us as any other human being. He would have known the ups and downs of growth and learning, of working out what it means to be human, to be in relationship. For some people it is not obvious that Jesus was also human just like us and that discovery can be liberating.

Luke's story is almost perverse enough to allow us to wonder if he might also have been saying: Jesus was a 'typical' adolescent. Inconsiderate? Next time, at least tell your mum and dad where you are! The intensity of youth?

The story symbolises the rite of passage into the beginnings of adulthood. It offers a framework in which to explore what it means for parents to let go.

Jesus 'was growing up'. There is a development of maturity and understanding. This is presented as a quite normal human process. The last verse in this passage.   
*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.*   
Luke gives us an ideal picture, but at least in doing so he retains a genuinely human Jesus in a genuinely human context.   
It is this Jesus (and this kind of Jesus, not one who dropped in complete from outer space) whom God anoints to declare and live out the good news of liberation and salvation.

**Luke 2:41-52**

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

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. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents 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.” He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he said to them.

Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour. \*\*\*\*\*\*\*