

THE HIDDEN LIFE: Saint Joseph the Worker

“You’re still not upset with me?” Jesus asked his father, Joseph.

“What makes you say that,” Joseph asked his son surprised.

“You just seem a little tense these past few days,” Jesus said concerned.

“No! I just have these orders to finish before a certain deadline,” Joseph reassured him. “Our trip to Jerusalem cost us a few more days than we had planned.”

“Sorry, I forgot to let you know that I was staying behind,” Jesus apologized again, for the umpteen time!

“Pass that dowel, son,” Joseph pointed to a round wooden peg. “I’m almost finished with this chair.” Joseph paused and looked at him, “Son, you celebrated your Bar Mitzvah. So, you are of age now and can even join in with other men for prayers in the synagogue. I am proud of you, son.”

“I just lost track of time in the temple, Dad. I never get tired of visiting there, and our trips are so few,” Jesus said excitedly. “I thought for sure that it would be the best place to find him.”

“Thank you for helping me, son,” Joseph encouraged him, keeping the dialogue open. Joseph always enjoyed his son’s questions. They were always so thought provoking and challenging, but at least it gave him an idea what and who he was thinking about...usually about Adonai or the Messiah. “Find who, son?”

“The Messiah, Dad!” Jesus said. He knew his father was pushing him to talk more, and he was always glad to oblige. “When the Messiah comes, he will surely make his appearance in the Temple!”

“You mean, ‘if’?” Joseph asked. He finished the chair. It was simply made, but sturdy. Repairing it was just as simple, since it only needed a new leg. “I guess you didn’t find him,” Joseph teased, “or you would have let us know by now.”

“No,” he said a little disappointed. “I have come to believe that I may never find him. But I did meet a holy and interesting rabbi called Gamaliel. He stood out from all the others. He and the others asked me many questions.”

“Isn’t he a Pharisee?” Joseph asked impressed.

“Yes and a member of the Sanhedrin!” Jesus added. “He asked me a very interesting question,” Jesus hesitated.

“Oh,” Joseph said, interested now in the question. “What did he ask?”

“He asked me, who is Adonai?” Jesus said, “...such a strange question.”

“And what did you tell him,” Joseph asked interested now.

"I knew he was not asking for the usual answer, the 'Shema'," Jesus said. "So I told him that God is love."

"I bet the old rabbi almost fell off his chair," Joseph teased but was surprised himself.

"The last time that happened, Israel lost a great priest at Shiloh in the person of Eli himself," Jesus teased back himself. "He then asked me how I came to that surprising conclusion. He knew we were from the Old Northern Kingdom."

"Unfortunately, anyone who lives outside of Jerusalem is looked down on," Joseph admitted.

"I told him that I came to that conclusion by two paths; one from the Prophet Hosea and the other from Genesis," Jesus said getting excited himself now.

"I am surprised you mentioned Hosea and not Isaiah of Jerusalem," Joseph teased again, "since the Prophet Hosea is from the North."

Jesus quoted from Hosea, "I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the Lord." Jesus added, "How could Adonai take Israel back unless he loved her deeply?"

"What did Gamaliel say to that?" Joseph asked.

"He seemed pleased, but was anxious to hear the other path," Jesus said.

"Which is," Joseph prompted.

Jesus seemed a little more emotional when he answered, but again quoted from the book of Genesis, "God created them in his image, in the divine image God created them; male and female God created them."

"I guess the love between a husband and wife is like the love God has for us," Joseph offered.

"Yes," Jesus accepted, "and the love you both have for me."

"Son," Joseph said, touched by Jesus' statement, "you will never know how much!"

Jesus added, "You, Father, and my Mother, have shown me the face of God...a God of love."

Joseph's heart was so filled with love for his son that he couldn't even speak.

And then he knew!