

Sermon for January 3, 2016 – 2nd Sunday after Christmas

Luke 2:41–52 (NIV84)

Theme: The Account of the 12-Year-Old Jesus Teaches Us . . .

- 1) *how to live as a Christian parent.*
- 2) *how to live as a Christian child.*

⁴¹ Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." ⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:41-52 NIV84)

Of the many things Christians would like to know more about, Jesus' childhood ranks high on the list. The Bible, however, has not been given to satisfy our idle curiosity. Every fact and account is given for the purpose of teaching us the things God wants us to know and believe so that we may have eternal life and glorify his name.

The Bible's only account of Jesus' childhood, therefore, doesn't satisfy our desire to know more about his youth. But it does teach us some very important lessons about who he is – as well as giving us some important instruction regarding the third and fourth commandments. Let us consider some of these things, under the theme: **The Account of the 12-Year-Old Jesus Teaches Us . . .** 1) *how to live as a Christian parent.* 2) *how to live as a Christian child.*

Part One: How to live as a Christian Parent.

Right after describing baby Jesus' presentation at the temple and how his family lived in Nazareth, Luke writes: *Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.*

This first verse already provides an important lesson for Christian parents to consider: the importance of fostering your own relationship with God.

One of the biggest mistakes parents make is “sending” their children to Sunday school instead of bringing them. What’s the difference? If you send your children without staying for Bible class and worship yourself, you are telling your children that Church is for kids – and not adults. You teach them that their relationship with God is less important than work, leisure, or sports. You reveal yourself as a hypocrite, because God’s Word clearly says that our relationship with the LORD is a Christian’s number-one concern.

Now, consider the example of Mary and Joseph. Being so poor and living so far from Jerusalem, they had a valid excuse not to go to the Passover feast every year.

And yet what does our text say? *Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.* Why did they do this? To remember the great mercy the LORD showed them – saving their ancestors from Egyptian slavery. As they remembered this past deliverance, they looked forward to the greater salvation that the coming Lamb of God would provide, whose blood would atone for the sins of the whole world.

Joseph and Mary took every opportunity to grow in their relationship with the LORD – and so should you. Why? First of all, because God commands it and you are sinning when you don’t.

But even if that were not enough, think about why God wants you to go to worship, participate in a Bible class and read his Word at home: it’s to learn more about him and his saving grace towards you. God wants you to grow in your relationship with him so that you might be strengthened to resist temptation, find forgiveness when you fall into sin and have hope for facing all the trials of life.

On top of this, it is only when your own faith has been thus strengthened that you will be able to pass it on to your children. This is God’s will for you – just as it was for Mary and Joseph. If you haven’t done this in the past, then repent – confessing your sin to Christ. He will forgive you. More than that, he will help you grow in your knowledge and zeal for him as you make use of many the opportunities he offers you to connect with him through his Word and Sacraments.

Let us go back to our text: ⁴² *When [Jesus] was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.* Whenever a Jewish boy reached the age of 12, he was considered a “son of the law” and came under all the obligations required of Jewish men. Think of how we view our children after confirmation, and you will get the gist of this Jewish custom.

⁴³ *After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.* ⁴⁴ *Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day.*

Now, at first glance we might be thinking: how in the world could Mary and Joseph lose their son for an entire day? Were they completely incompetent?

That would be very unfair to them – especially if you understood the custom of the time. People travelled in large caravans of friends and relatives for safety and mutual support. Because some people naturally walk faster than others, various family groups wouldn’t always be in close

proximity to one another. This certainly was the case here. Jesus probably had been on this “road” trip every year of his 12 year old life. We can certainly imagine Mary and Joseph letting him travel with his friends and relatives – just as we might let our kids ride in Uncle John’s car when we go on an extended family outing. Mary and Joseph simply assumed that Jesus was with them – and there was no reason not to - until they reached camp and *began looking for him among their relatives and friends.*

We can just imagine the shock Mary and Joseph had when they couldn’t find their son. Their unintentional negligence led them to lose Jesus.

And here is another life lesson for every Christian to take to heart: don’t travel through life – merely assuming Christ is with you. Make sure that he is! And how do we check to see if Christ is with us? By examining our hearts in the light of God’s Law and Gospel.

Take some time with the 10 Commandments – considering how you have broken them. Do your sins bother you, and if not, why not? Are you truly sorry for all the evil you have thought, spoken or done? Do you trust that Jesus is your Savior, who has lived a perfect life in your place, died for all your sins, and rose again so you can live with him forever in heaven? Do you believe that He forgives all your sins? Do you desire, in the peace of God’s forgiveness, to live a new life to the glory of God the Father?

Use these questions every day to make sure you haven’t left Jesus somewhere on your life’s journey. And if you find him missing, go look for him in the only place where he lets himself be found: his Word.

Part Two: how to live as a Christian child.

Back to Mary and Joseph. We read: ⁴⁵ *When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.* ⁴⁶ *After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.*

Notice that the Bible does not describe young Jesus teaching priests, as many pictures often portray him doing. He was, rather, asking questions and engaging in discussion in order to learn. You see then that Jesus, as man, had to study – just like we do!

⁴⁷ *Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.* This is not to say that young Jesus “knew it all”, but that his questions and answers showed remarkable comprehension and desire to learn. This 12 year old boy from a hick town in Galilee was discussing theology with Israel’s most learned – showing a keen zeal for the Bible.

Here, dear children, is a lesson for you. Now, I don’t expect you to know as much as young Jesus, but I do pray that you share His desire to learn. Why do you think Jesus wanted to know more and more about the Bible? It’s because it connected him with His heavenly Father – reminding him of God’s promises and love.

No, you aren't Jesus, but – through Baptism – you are a dear child of God. Let this fact lead you to want to learn more about your heavenly Father. Feel free to ask your parents, Sunday school teachers, and pastor, all the questions you have about God. We may not be able to answer them all for you, but we will be more than happy to share what God reveals to us in his Word, that you may grow in faith and love towards your LORD.

⁴⁸ *When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." ⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"*

Jesus' answer is far more than just telling his folks that he was where they left them. A more literal translation of Jesus' words would be: "*Did you not know that it is necessary for me to be in the things of my Father?* In other words Jesus is saying: "Dear earthly mother and father, you need not worry about me. I am here, in my Father's temple. All the objects and events happening here point to me and my work. I am here learning and confessing God's Word – which is my true Father's will for me. Remember: I am his special Son, sent here on a mission to accomplish His will. This is where you will always find me."

⁵⁰ *But they did not understand what he was saying to them.* Being with Jesus for so long - clothing, feeding and teaching him - made them forget that their child was God's Son, the promised Messiah, who would save mankind from its bondage to sin, death and the power of the devil. Yes, it was necessary for Jesus to be in His Father's house, doing all the things his Father had planned for him.

⁵¹ *Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

And here we have Jesus' childhood and adolescence summarized in a nutshell. We don't have all the information we want, but we do have the information we need. And this it is enough for us to draw yet another lesson.

Children: notice how your Savior embraced his childhood. He, who knows all, went to school in order to learn. He studied hard. He listened to his parents – submitting to them in everything. He did not lash out in anger when he felt they were being unfair, but tolerated everything with a forgiving heart. Jesus respected his earthly father and mother as much as he respected his heavenly Father – understanding that they were his representatives, given to care for him and protect him.

Children, learn from Jesus' example and be obedient to your parents – for this is good and pleases the LORD. Recognize how God provides for you through their service. Pray for them and love them – even if they do wrong.

Brothers and sisters in Christ – even though the account of Jesus' youth is short, there are still more lessons to learn than we have time for in this sermon. For today, however, I hope you saw how this account encourages Christian parents and children to be zealous for God's Word. May we be led to repent of all the times we have been less than zealous for the Gospel; and rejoice in the fact that Jesus' perfect zeal for His Father saves us from our sins.

This is the primary reason God had this account of Jesus' youth recorded in Scripture: to show how Jesus, even from his youth, fulfilled God's law by keeping his commandments in our place. May this truth move us to love him all the more – ever recognizing him as God's Son and our Savior. Amen.