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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY
Second Sunday after Christmas
January 4, 2015
Text: Luke 2:40–52

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

King Solomon of Israel had the opportunity that dreams are made of. God came to Solomon and gave him the chance to ask for anything. You name it; I'll give it. What would you ask for if given the chance? It might just reveal something about your deepest desires.

I'm sure you've heard the myth about King Midas and the golden touch. He was given the chance by Dionysus, the god of wine and merrymaking, to ask for anything he wanted. Midas foolishly asked for the infamous golden touch which eventually led to his beloved daughter being turned into a golden statue. Eventually, Midas was set free from his curse and his daughter was returned back to life. Through this experience, he learned a measure of wisdom.

Wisdom is what Solomon asked God to give him. Listen to his request, "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?" (I Kings 3:9). Solomon didn't ask for wealth, or the destruction of his enemies, or a charismatic personality; he didn't even ask to for super intelligence. *Wisdom, the ability to discern between what is good and evil and the wherewithal to act accordingly* is what Solomon requests. And God is pleased with the request and grants it accordingly. "Behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you" (I Kings. 3:12).

Solomon goes down in history as the wisest king to ever live. At least until, another king arises, Solomon's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's the 2nd Sunday after Christmas or, if you prefer, 11th day of Christmas. Jesus is no longer the baby in Bethlehem worshipped and adored by shepherds. We're even past the journey of the Wise Men (even though they'll show up on Tuesday when we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord). Jesus entered into obscurity for almost 12 years.

Only one verse describes the 12 years between the Lord's birth and today's reading. It's vs. 40, "The child Jesus grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him." Strength and wisdom; physical and spiritual growth resulting in the favor of His heavenly Father.

Can't you just imagine the normal growth you'd expect in a boy? Jesus is maturing, physically, mentally, emotionally, just like any other boy becoming a young man. Except there is a remarkable difference. Jesus possesses a remarkable wisdom, well beyond the normal expectations of a 12 year old boy. Luke describes how the Lord's wisdom is revealed in a most unexpected way: Jesus gets lost by His parents!!

According to Luke 2:41–42, Joseph, Mary and Jesus – the Holy Family – journeyed the 90 miles or so each year from Nazareth to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Feast of Passover. From the Biblical information we have, Jesus grew up in a very pious home with faithful, loving parents of faith and virtue. It was in the context of a family that Jesus grew and became strong (physically), and was filled with wisdom.

Strength and wisdom are found in the home. During the New Year's Eve service, I said that all Christian faith and devotion begins in the home, the family. It's there that we learn to love and be loved, to forgive and be forgiven, to pray, serve, worship, suffer, laugh; in other words, we grow in strength and wisdom in the day to day life of the home and family. What we learn there, we take out into the world of our daily vocations and civic obligations. I can't commend and praise sufficiently you fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers for your faithful devotion to the Lord in providing a Christian home for your families. May the Lord of all grace continue to strengthen and uphold you and your beloved family members.

When Jesus turned 12, He and His family went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover as was their custom (vs. 42). They traveled with extended family and friends in larger caravans for greater protection from bandits and robbers. After the Passover was over, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without His parents' knowledge (vs. 43)! Thinking He was somewhere in the caravan, Joseph and Mary travel a full day before they realize that Jesus was missing. They high-tail it back to Jerusalem. After 3 days they found Jesus in the Temple "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (vs. 46).

This is where it gets very interesting. Remember, I said that Luke reveals the Lord's wisdom, at 12 years old, in the particular episode. Vs. 47, "And all who heard him

(i.e., Jesus) were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” Can’t you just imagine this 12 year old young man sitting among the long-bearded, gray haired scribes and teachers of the law? By the way, in 1st century Israel, they didn’t have category of “teenager” or “adolescent.” You were either a child or a man/woman. The age of separation was 12. Jesus is considered a man, a young man to be sure, but a man nonetheless. So, Jesus the young man is having a vigorous discussion with His elder peers and they are amazed at His understanding and answers.

Note this well...they were amazed at the Lord’s ability to spit out facts and figures but His understanding, His wisdom. The young are typically great at soaking in knowledge. But they aren’t known for wisdom. Give a 12 year old the latest electronic device and they’ll figure it out rather quickly. Ask them the meaning of life or what does it mean to be human or is there virtue in suffering or how does a life of virtue lead to greater happiness and you’ll probably get perplexed looks. Those are questions of wisdom which we defined as *the ability to discern between what is good and evil and the wherewithal to act accordingly*.

But we know that Jesus is no ordinary young man. He’s the wisdom of God in human flesh and blood. Jesus is the wisdom of God who made the universe in all of its vast and beautiful glory. He’s the wisdom of God who will redeem the world, not through sheer power and majesty – that would be human wisdom – but through suffering, death, and resurrection. Even at 12, Jesus is the fullness of God’s wisdom in human form. He is the very fulfillment and embodiment of what we read in the appointed selection from Psalm 119:97 – 104. I invite you to turn back to your bulletins and follow through today’s Psalm. But I want you to read it in 2 ways. First, in the light of the 12 year old Lord Jesus sitting among the teachers and elders of Israel. Second, as a prayer for your own life as you pursue God’s wisdom revealed in these inspired words. Btw, this is a good way of reading the Psalms in general: search for the revelation of Jesus and the revelation of God’s will for your own life.

⁹⁷Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.

⁹⁹I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.

¹⁰⁰I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

¹⁰¹I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.

¹⁰²I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me.

¹⁰³How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

The Lord Jesus, the wisdom and strength of God, is revealed in these words. They reveal the Christ-like life of wisdom and virtue we seek. I encourage you to pray these words throughout the week as you seek to grow in the grace, knowledge, and wisdom of the Lord Jesus.

But Luke isn't finished revealing the wisdom of the Lord Jesus. Joseph and Mary are angry that Jesus was missing for three days. "Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress" (vs. 48). Jesus respectfully and obediently (think here about the 4th commandment and honoring parents and other authorities) answers by saying (vs. 49), "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Mom, don't remember what the angels told you and dad? I'm the Son of God and the Savior of the world. The things happening here in the Temple, the sacrifices, the prayers, the blessings, the teaching of God's Word, the worship, even the furniture and utensil used day after day, everything points to me and what I came to do.

Joseph and Mary didn't understand all this. But notice what Jesus does in vs. 51, "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them." God's Son submits to His earthly parents. The Temple is His Father's house. And He is the Savior of the world. But the fullness of time is not yet. That will come in another 18 years or so. Then He will preach, teach, heal, die, and rise again for the salvation of the world. That's the wisdom of God revealed in Jesus, submission to the Father's plan and authority even as it's found in His earthly parents, His family.

Through Jesus we learn what wisdom is: *the ability to discern between what is good and evil and the wherewithal to act accordingly*. The highest wisdom is faith in the power and wisdom of God (see I Cor. 1) revealed in human form. On this 11th day of Christmas, the greatest wisdom any of us can obtain is to love and trust Jesus.

A very Merry Christmas to you all.

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.