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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Second Sunday after Christmas (Series A)

January 5, 2014

Text: Luke 2:40–52

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

The details of the Lord's childhood are a bit sketchy. The Bible doesn't record many details. Matthew tells us that the Wise Men came to adore Jesus when He was a child under 2 years old. After the Wise Men returned to the east, Joseph hastily took Jesus and Mary to live in Egypt. Eventually, they returned to Nazareth to live in virtual obscurity until the 30 year old Jesus appears to be baptized by John the Baptist.

Luke provides the most detail, not only about the Lord's birth, but about the weeks following. We know that Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem when Jesus was 40 days old. They met Simeon and Anna on that occasion. Luke summarizes the Lord's entire childhood with "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him" (vs. 40). And that's about it except for the events in today's gospel reading from Luke 2:40–51.

Now doesn't that strike you as odd? The sinless Son of God doesn't attract any more attention than that. Shouldn't pure holiness, complete obedience, and absolute divine presence create more notice? Jesus is the incarnate 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity through whom God the Father spoke the universe into existence. The amazing thing is that nobody is really amazed about Jesus. From the Biblical information provided (and not provided), Jesus appears to have grown up in a faithful, loving home with little notice from anyone other than Joseph and Mary. From all appearances, the Child Jesus was easily lost in a crowd for He was exceedingly ordinary; He looked just like any other Jewish kid.

He's so ordinary in fact, that Joseph and Mary lost the 12-year old Jesus in the caravan returning home from the Passover celebration. According to Luke 2:42, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus went to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover. So Jesus was used to being in the Temple hearing God's Word, worshipping with God's people, and eating the Passover in accordance to God's Law. Just like so many other Jewish families. Pretty humdrum. And that's what makes today's reading so amazing!

Last Sunday, I mentioned that God the Father used the Lord's earthly parents to protect Jesus from the murderous rage of King Herod. In other words, a family was given the task of caring for the Savior of the world. And if there's anything characteristic about family life is that it's pretty ordinary. Think about your daily routine. We moderns are exceedingly busy; there's lots of activity going on but nothing earth-shattering happens. Kids go to school. Meals are prepared. Clothes are washed. In Christian homes, prayers are offered; forgiveness is shared. Parents and children learn what it means to be human in the confines of a home, in the context of a family.

Joseph, Mary, and Jesus provide a beautiful picture of the family. Jesus learned to be a carpenter from Joseph. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover every year. It's even safe to assume they went to the synagogue in Nazareth on a regular basis. When Jesus teachers in Nazareth's synagogue as an adult, the crowd is amazed, even a bit offended, at Jesus' teaching. Their reaction is "Isn't this Joseph's son?" (Lk 4:22). We know this guy. And He thinks He's the fulfillment of Holy Scripture?

All the real action of human life grows out of the family. The same love and care you parents and grandparents give to your families each and every day is the same love Joseph and Mary gave to Jesus; the same love that nurtured the Savior. I can't commend or praise you parents enough for your faithfulness to your families. That daily, even ordinary, love is the most precious gift you can give. It will not go unnoticed by your heavenly Father. Well done! Dear saints of God.

But sometimes, extraordinary events happen in families. Mary and Joseph certainly had one. I can just imagine them sitting around the evening table saying, "Do you remember the time we left Jesus behind in the Temple? He was only 12! What a terrible few days those were!"

On that occasion, Joseph and Mary discovered that Jesus was missing from the caravan. It took them 3 days to find Jesus, according to vs. 46.

They find Jesus in the Temple "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (vs. 46). Jesus is having a rather vigorous and engaging theological conversation with all the experts. And Luke says the teachers and elders "were amazed at his (i.e., Jesus) understanding and his answers." Their amazement

only heightens how ordinary Jesus looked. He's just a 12 year old kid. How does He understand these things?!

When Mary finds Jesus, she gives Him an earful, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress" (vs. 48). Can't we all relate to Mary's words? Jesus, you scarred the living daylights out of us. You should have stayed with the family!

But in keeping with the 4th Commandment to "honor your father and your mother," our Lord respectfully says, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (vs. 49). In other words, Jesus is saying that His place is around the things of God.

Jesus is teaching His frightened parents two things here. First, Jesus reminds them who He is, the true Son of God the Father. Did you notice what Jesus said, "I must be in *my* Father's house"? It's as if Jesus were saying, "Mom, dad have you forgotten who My Father is? Have these 12 years of living with me day in and day out made you forget that I'm your Lord and God? Remember what the angel said to you, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you...therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.'"

Jesus is gently and respectfully reminding His mother that He is God. Luke records this so that we can be reminded that Jesus is God not only from the very moment of His conception in Mary's womb but even at 12 years of age. Knowing this is especially helpful during our modern Christmas celebrations which tend to separate the joy and peace of Christmas from the God who became flesh to give those marvelous gifts.

The second thing that Jesus is telling His mother and us is that He has a divine task. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" To understand the reference to "my Father's house" you must remember what takes place at the Temple. Teaching God's Word, prayer, worship, and most importantly, the offering of sacrifices for the atonement of the world's sins are what the Father's house is all about.

Jesus is reminding His parents that He came to be the Messiah. It's what the angel told Joseph about the Child in Mary's womb. You shall call Him Jesus for He will save His people from their sin (Mt. 1:21). Everything that took place in the Temple –

what Jesus calls “my Father’s house – was telling the world how sins would be taken away. The Temple testified to the identify and mission of this 12 year old Child.

Luke writes that Joseph and Mary did not understand what Jesus was telling them though Mary did make a point to remember it (vs. 50-51). Better understanding would begin to come later when she saw her Son dying on the cross; it became crystal clear when she and the rest of the 120 disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Jesus goes back home to Nazareth. Vs. 51 says that Jesus was “submissive to (His parents.” Jesus kept the 4th Commandment to “honor His father and His mother.” This too was part of His keeping the Law in order to redeem us who were the Law’s curse. Remember this the next time you think submitting to your parents or boss or to that annoying law or that troublesome politician is degrading. The eternal, divine Son of God did not consider it beneath His dignity to submit to the concerns of His very frail and sinful parents.

The Christmas season, from beginning to end, is about what Jesus did to bring joy and peace to you and all the people on earth. It’s about more than mere wishing and hoping for good things. The gifts of heaven are actually delivered so that we can live as free, new born children of our heavenly Father. A 12 year old Jesus knew this and wanted to be about the task. The adult Jesus accomplished it for us and for our salvation.

A 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.