

WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN
Sermon for the 2nd Sunday after Christmas
Luke 2:40-52

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Gospel from before, Luke 2:41-52: **40 The Child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.**

41 Every year Jesus' parents used to go 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 When they had spent the days there and while they were returning, the Boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents were unaware of this. 44 They thought He was with the others who were travelling with them. After travelling for a day, they began to look for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem, looking for Him. 46 After three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. 47 All those who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. 48 When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. His mother asked Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look! Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

49 He asked them, "Why have you been looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's business?"

50 However, they did not understand what He said to them. 51 Then He went down with them, came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother kept all these things in her heart. 52 Jesus grew wiser and taller and increased in the approval of God and of people.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

There are only a few details about the life of Jesus before He began His public ministry in the Bible. This is one of them - very nearly the only one. Jesus is making the Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem with His family, possibly for the first time. It may be that Jesus went with them every year - since Luke tells us that "**Every year Jesus' parents used to go,**" but this year *was different*. This year the boy Jesus was twelve. That is significant because that is roughly the age at which boys go through Bar-Mitzvah. "Bar-Mitzvah" means "Son of the Commandments." It is roughly equivalent to our confirmation, except that it is the time when a young Jewish boy formally becomes a man before the Law and is held to be responsible for his own life and conduct before God and his fellow man. So, this is the visit of Jesus - the *first* visit of Jesus as a man before the Jewish law and religion - to the Temple. It is this age/relationship to the Temple religion that makes this event noteworthy - and gives meaning to the thing Jesus says to His parents.

Luke focuses his account on the fact that Jesus, the young boy, had stayed behind in Jerusalem when the family caravan had headed back north to Nazareth. No one seemed to be aware of it - which seems strange to our modern mind but fits well in the close communities of the ancient world, particularly of Israel in the time of Jesus. Nearly everyone in Nazareth was related, and young boys, who were just recently declared to be men, could have been expected to hang out somewhere in the caravan with others their age and not report for an attendance check immediately. Mary and Joseph presumed that Jesus was in the caravan.

Did Jesus miss the departing caravan deliberately? It is difficult to say, and yet, Jesus probably figured, after three days, that they were gone. He was not worried. This was the first year He was at the Temple for the Passover as an official "man" - an adult before the faith. Finally, Jesus was now permitted to ask questions and join in the discussions about the Scriptures, the traditions of Israel, and the theology of their faith in the presence of the most learned scholars of His day. That opportunity would be like "red meat" to anyone who took their religion seriously!

Clearly, Jesus did take His religion seriously. His parents had taken three days to find Jesus - after the first day's journey, before they noticed He was absent from the caravan - presumably because they had spent their days searching all of the places a young boy may want to go, places that would fascinate a child, and places where young adolescents would likely be drawn to. It seems that they did not yet deal with Jesus in their heads as a man - but clearly, Jesus was acting and thinking like a man. When they had found Him, Jesus asked them, "**Why have you been looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's business?**" The question meant, "*Why did you need to search? You should have known where I would be.*"

And they should have. They were not thinking particularly about who Jesus was or what His age meant. If they had been, they would have naturally looked for Him in the Temple *first*. It may be surprising to find Him teaching the teachers - but

only because He had never done such a thing before. But when you consider that He was the One speaking through the prophets, His ability to understand the Scriptures is not as amazing.

Naturally, He would find misunderstandings and distortions among the theology of the priests and teachers of His day, and He taught them with gentleness and humility. He did not lecture; He asked questions. He did not expect them to get it all at once but allowed them to ask Him questions too, and He left them all amazed at His questions and His answers - pleasantly surprised and learning.

How do we know He was teaching? Because He was **“sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.”** A student would have stood. An equal may have sat among them, but a student would have stood in the presence of one teacher, much less a group of them. Questioning was also an ancient method of teaching. Jesus was teaching them, preparing the soil, as it were, *for the ministry to come*. Perhaps we can imagine that some of those who learned from Jesus there spread their learning to others with the result that His approach to the Scriptures was scattered in advance to prepare the Jews to hear and understand and believe the truth. Perhaps none of them, too, ever confessed that they had learned anything new from this mere Child!

We could apply this text to our lives by focusing on the study in the Temple and suggesting that this tells us that we should be about the business of studying the Word of God. That certainly is true, even if it is not particularly a message of this text. We could apply it to the truth that Jesus remained willingly in submission to His parents, even though He obviously did not need to do so, except to fulfil His place as a faithful Son. But that is not the weight of this message for us today, either.

Jesus was just twelve, yet He was right that His parents should have known. They should have realised that their Son, though a dutiful son and a good boy, was also the ***Son of God***. They should have realised *where* they needed to search for Him. The Apostle Paul writes how Jesus *“emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave and became like other human beings”* (Phil. 2:7). As a human being, Jesus’ interest in religion did not blossom overnight in Jerusalem. Surely it had matured in a young boy asking a lot of questions and trying to understand the faith in which He was being raised. It was one thing for Jesus to understand as God and another for Him to understand as a young child - and He had to learn how to understand as a person, too. Mary and Joseph should have known.

And we should know, too! We should always keep in mind just who Jesus is. He is God, Almighty and Creator and - *“Wonderful Counsellor,” “Mighty God,” “Everlasting Father,” “Prince of Peace”* (Isaiah 9:6). We focus so much on the *human* in Christ that we often neglect to think about the *divine* in Him.

He is God. He has made everything, and so He owns everything. He can do whatever we need, and He will never fail to provide - but always in accord with His will - which we confess to be good and gracious. We can *trust* Him, and He has a claim on us! Our morality is to come from who He is and that we are freely and gladly associated with Him. Our worldview should also come out of the knowledge of the goodwill and love of God and the great lengths to which Jesus was willing to go out of His great love for us. We cannot be defeatists or pessimists. God is good, and His will toward us is marvellous! So whatever is happening and however ‘things’ look to us, we can be confident in Jesus Christ.

Look at what He *has* done for us. He has died on the cross. He lived for thirty-three years among people who were as twisted, from His perspective, as the wildest Islamic suicide terrorist is in ours. He has done it all for us. He has lived and died in such a gruesome manner, without sin and without taking recourse to His divine power for Himself and His own sake. True, He performed an occasional miracle, but always for us and our understanding. He also took life as it came to Him, *trusting God*, just as we are to trust God.

Then He endured torture and mocking and false imprisonment and unjust conviction and grisly execution by crucifixion - all to endure, though innocent, what you and I deserve due to our guilt and sins. Because of Jesus, our sins are completely forgiven, and we have been given the gift of everlasting life. How good He is! How good He has been to us! We should know that we are safe and secure and that whatever may trouble us is for good - usually our own good. And we should understand that Jesus simply will not let evil come upon us to destroy us. Sometimes He allows us to suffer to help us remember to call upon Him and trust in Him and make a habit of crying out to Him for forgiveness and help and healing and strength, but not for evil. We should have known.

And knowing, we should know right where to look for Him, just as His parents should also have known. Some people look for Him in entertainment. Others are searching for Him in their moods and “feelings.” People judge His appearance by how life seems to be going for them today. They look for Him on television or in pious looks and pious sounds. We know where to look, though, don’t we? We should know.

We need to look for Him where He has promised to be - **“Did you not know that I had to be about My Father’s business?”** *“Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as some are regularly doing, but let us continue to*

encourage one another, and so much more as you see the day approaching!" the writer of Hebrews says (10:25). We need to look for Him in worship, where His Word is proclaimed, and His gifts are given - in the absolution, in the waters of Baptism, and in the Holy Supper which He lays before us for our refreshment, and for our forgiveness, and for our blessing, and our strengthening. Here, in His holy Word. Here, in His body and blood is where we need to look. Here in the fellowship of His people - His holy body - is where He is to be found **and nowhere else**. Others may catch a glimpse of Him in you and through you, but when you want to *find* Jesus, you should not need three days of searching, but find Him in worship, in hearing His Word preached, and in eating of this Holy Meal.

Of course, He *is* always with us. We know that, too. We don't have to search. We just have to believe Him, we know, and take Him at His Word. Sometimes He doesn't permit us to feel like He is there for a time. That is to strengthen our faith. At those moments, we must cling to the naked word of promise, "*Certainly, I am with you always, until the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20). We must close our eyes, at times, so that the sight of things doesn't blind us to Him and His truth. He is with us - and when we want to be sure to find Him, we have to go to the place where He has promised to be, where we hear His voice speaking and hold Him in our hands and in our mouths. Here, among His people, and yes, His friends, is where He is to be found in every need. We should have known, and we do. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Father in heaven, You have sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to show Your great love to us, and to lavish Your limitless mercy on us. We thank You for all the blessings He has brought us, especially for the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins. Open our eyes to see Your glory and truth revealed in Him. Since He is our true Wisdom, grant that we may continue to cling to Him in faith, that we may know the joy of being Your sons and daughters, and continue to have the peace of being heirs of eternal life. Renew us by Your Holy Spirit, and lead us by the light of Jesus Christ to increased knowledge and wisdom, that we may gladly walk in His steps. And if we must suffer because we are Christians, help us to face it with joy, for we bear Christ's name.

Bless Your Church, O God, and give Your people fervent faith and power. Free them from all unrighteousness, and help them to walk on holy paths. Direct their lives that they may bring honour to Your name, and show forth Your praise among all people.

Extend Your rule over all lands and nations. Give wisdom to all in authority, that the nations may be governed in peace, justice, and mercy. Give parents grace and wisdom to bring up their children to fear and honour You, that they may avoid the lies of Satan and be guided by Your truth. Comfort the sick and suffering, and give strength and compassion to all who bring help and healing to them in hospitals and homes. In all places of industry and commerce, give people a vision of Your Word and will, that all, whatever their work or position, may seek to serve You.

Be with all who travel, with all in danger of body or spirit, with all who are imprisoned, and with all who face any temptation. Grant them the joy and strength of Your presence and help.

In these and in all other things that we need, give us, O Father, Your help and mercy, for we pray in the name of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ, who with You and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

1 Kings 3:4-15

⁴ The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices there, for that was the most important high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night. God said: "Ask Me! What shall I give you?"

⁶ Solomon answered: "You have shown great kindness to Your servant, my father David, while he lived in Your presence in truth, in righteousness and with an upright heart toward You. You have continued to show him this great kindness and have given him a son to sit on his throne, as is so today. ⁷ Now, O LORD, my God, You have made me, Your servant, king instead of my father David, although I am only a little lad and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸ I, Your servant, am among Your people, whom You have chosen, a numerous people, too many to count or record. ⁹ Therefore, give me, Your servant, a mind that listens, that I may judge Your people and distinguish between good and evil! For who can judge this great people of Yours?"

¹⁰ This request, which Solomon had made, pleased the LORD. ¹¹ God replied to him: "Because you have asked for this, have not requested a long life for yourself, have not requested riches for yourself and have not requested the lives of your enemies but have requested understanding for yourself, to discern what is right, ¹² look! I have done as you have asked. See! I have given you a wise and understanding mind, so that there has been no one like you before you and no one will arise like you after you."

¹³ Moreover, I have also given you what you have not asked for, both riches and honour, so that no other king will have been like you all your life. ¹⁴ If you also live according to My Ways and keep My Prescriptions and My Commandments as your father David has lived, then I shall give you a long life."

¹⁵ When Solomon woke up, he realised that it had been a dream. He went to Jerusalem, stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings. He also made a feast for all his officials.

Ephesians 1:3-14

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ! ⁴ For before He made the world, His love led Him to choose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love ⁵ He predestined us to be adopted as His own sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the good pleasure of His will. ⁶ He did this that His glorious grace, which He bestowed on us in

His dearly loved Son, might be praised. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, because of God's rich grace. ⁸ He caused His grace to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ when He made known to us the mystery of His will. According to His good pleasure it was His purpose in Christ ¹⁰ to manage everything, both in heaven and on earth, in such a way that, when the right time came, He might summarise all things in Christ. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance. He who carries out everything exactly as His will plans it has predestined us according to His purpose. ¹² He did this that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might praise His glory. ¹³ When you heard the message of the truth, the Good News that you have been saved and when you became believers, you were also sealed in Him by the Holy Spirit, whom God promised. ¹⁴ That Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until God redeems us to be His very own, that His glory may be praised.

Luke 2:40-52

⁴⁰ The Child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents used to go 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 When they had spent the days there and while they were returning, the Boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents were unaware of this. ⁴⁴ They thought He was with the others who were travelling with them. After travelling for a day, they began to look for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem, looking for Him.

⁴⁶ After three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ All those who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. His mother asked Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look! Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

⁴⁹ He asked them, "Why have you been looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's business?"

⁵⁰ However, they did not understand what He said to them. ⁵¹ Then He went down with them, came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵² Jesus grew wiser and taller and **increased in the approval of God and of people.**