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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 30, 2018
Sunday after Christmas

Scripture Lessons: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26, Hebrews 2:10-18
Hymns: 1108; 91; 99; 97 (105:1,2,8)

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

Sermon Text: Luke 2:41-52

⁴¹ His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. ⁴³ When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ⁴⁶ Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

⁴⁹ And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

⁵¹ Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these

things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God incarnate, our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Incarnation of the Son of God!

That great mystery was the focus of our Christmas Day meditation. We used the familiar words of John 1: 14 for that meditation, *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* We considered great spiritual truths as we considered this wonder of grace that the Word of God which is the Son of God, took upon Himself human flesh, not just flesh, but humanity. In this morning’s epistle lesson the point was made *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death, He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil.”* (Hebrew 2:14) We are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus; the children whose care has been entrusted to Jesus. It was for us and for our salvation that Jesus became human; He became human so He could die, die for us, die to deliver us from the devil’s power.

We know about the ministry of Jesus. We also know of His sufferings and death, though we cannot fathom the deep woe Jesus endured on the cross while under the curse of God the Father. He had to be human to do this, not just in appearance, but fully human while at the same time He was (and is) fully God.

This morning we return to the mystery, that wonder of the incarnation as we see a glimpse of how that worked in

Jesus' life even as a young man, really no more than a boy. Our text tells us of the 12 year old Boy Jesus in the temple. The Spirit leads us to exclaim --

THEME: What an Amazing Child!

What we have presented for us in our text is a twelve year old boy. That was a significant age within Jewish society and custom, for it was at that age that they were to acknowledge that they were mature enough and had learned enough to assume spiritual responsibility for their own hearts and lives. Jesus was of that age when He traveled with his family and other relatives and acquaintances from Nazareth in Galilee all the way to Jerusalem to observe the Passover festival. We are told that this was customary for both Mary and Joseph. The law required that all men, should make this annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but that women and children could remain at home. That Mary annually accompanied Joseph along with Jesus and any other children they might have had reveals for us the devote nature of this household. What the events of our text reveal about Jesus is that this was -

I. A Child with Purpose.

The Passover week had reached its conclusion, and the whole band of travelers began their long trek home. Now it is important to remember that this was an annual event, and that it was common that large groups of family and friends traveled together. Joseph and Mary were not being neglectful in their assumption that Jesus was with other boys His age, or perhaps with other relatives. Of course that evening when after a long day's walk they discovered that they were wrong, and Jesus was not to be found among their band of travelers they were in a panic, and hurried back to Jerusalem, no doubt walking most of the night to get there, and then searching frantically for Jesus, not just for hours but for three days!

Any of us parents can easily sympathize with their state of mind. I imagine they searched in all the places they could think of that might have attracted Jesus. Surely they searched where their encampment had been. Perhaps they searched market places, wherever they might find twelve year old boys gathered. It wasn't until sometime on that third day they Mary and Joseph went to the temple in search of Jesus. As we know that is where they found the boy Jesus deep in religious discussions with some of the temple scribes and biblical scholars.

I think we can understand Mary's frustration as she addresses her Son,

Luke 2:48 "So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

There is an accusation present within these words. Mary felt that she had been wronged, but in actuality what happened was that she had a Son who, even as a 12 year old boy, was a Child with purpose. He had taken on that responsibility for His own spirituality and had acted according to that responsibility. In fact it went beyond that, as Jesus' response to His mother reveals.

Luke 2:49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Our English translations can be a bit misleading, taking us in the direction of Jesus being a bit smug, acting superior with His mother. That was not the case. If we try to comprehend the sense of the Greek a little better we find that Jesus isn't rebuking or putting down His parents in any way, but that rather He is a little surprised that they were anxiously searching for Him. Jesus' response could perhaps be phrased in our colloquial English as "*What? You were looking for Me? Didn't you know I must be about*

My Father's business?" Jesus was focused on His divine purpose. Already as a twelve year old boy He comprehended that He possessed a purpose that was given Him from His Father in heaven, and that was what He was about, what His life was about already at the age of twelve. He had the purpose of our salvation, a life of ministry before Him, and Jesus was diligently preparing to fulfill that purpose.

Yes, What the Spirit presents to us concerning Jesus is that He was an Amazing Child. His parents were amazed to find Jesus in the temple. Jesus didn't necessarily think that anyone should find this so amazing because He needed to be about His heavenly Father's business. However, we also find this amazing, because Jesus was already serving that life purpose, preparing for His life mission with a spirituality that is singular and unique for a twelve year old boy. What an example for our youth! What an example for any of us to have such a focus on divine purpose for one's life! More importantly, what an assurance for our salvation to see Jesus being about His Father's business!

But how well was Jesus doing at seeing to His Father's business? Our text presents to us an Amazing Child, --

II. A Child with Understanding.

Our text records what was going on when Mary and Joseph discovered Jesus in the temple.

Luke 2:46-47 Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

Jesus wasn't there teaching the teachers. Jesus was there listening and asking them questions. Obviously the teachers, the temple Bible scholars were asking Jesus

questions as well since our text speaks of their reaction to Jesus' answers. Jesus was an amazing Boy.

This may have begun with Jesus showing up at the temple and encountering a scribe to whom Jesus presented a question that was on His mind. If that is indeed what took place it grew from there. More teachers were drawn into the conversation. Teachers do love engaging students, even students who make them think, challenging in that manner. It appears that Jesus was indeed challenging in that way. We are told that they were astonished at both His understanding and His answers.

The word I would like to focus on here is the word "understanding." The implication of the word that is used in the Greek is of making connections. As Jesus was involved in these discussions with the Bible scholars He was making connections. Not person to person connections, but scripture to scripture connections. That is not easy. It requires a thorough knowledge of God's Word, a knowledge that comes with careful and diligent study. Jesus was a boy of twelve years, who had only recently finished "Hebrew school," what we would call catechism classes. There are times when I am impressed with the seriousness of catechism students, and pleased with their faithfulness to complete their lessons, and when they capture a basic concept I am really pleased. This went beyond anything I have experienced. Jesus was really making the scriptural connections that showed a depth of understanding of what all the scriptures were about. What these teachers did not know was these Scriptures were about this Boy, this amazing Boy, who was the Word made flesh.

This understanding wasn't present with Jesus because He was the Son of God, so of course He already knew all these things. In His humiliation He didn't make use of the omniscience He possessed to make His lessons easier. He came to the temple to ask, to search the Scriptures, to learn. Yes, Jesus knew what His role and purpose was in

this world, and for that He prepared Himself. He searched the Scriptures and by the Spirit's blessing Jesus gained that understanding that astonished the teachers.

As we said there is no hint here of Jesus being disrespectful or arrogant in His attitude toward the teachers in the temple. He was an Amazing Boy and -

III. An Obedient Child.

Once Joseph and Mary found Jesus it was clear that it was indeed time to go home.

Luke 2:51-52 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

These last couple of verses may not sound so amazing to us, but they really are. If we learned anything here we learned that already as a boy Jesus knew the circumstances of His birth, and His identity as the incarnate Son of God. Mary and Joseph had not hidden this from Him. The implications of this knowledge are quite plain. He was God, Joseph and Mary were mere mortals. Another 12 year old boy might have seen a reversal in roles as appropriate. The Lord should be in charge of things, and not the mortals. That is not what happened with Jesus. They came to get Jesus from the temple and take Him home, and He went with them. Back home Jesus was subject to them, to both of them, Joseph as well as Mary His mother. In their society Jesus would have worked at the construction trade Joseph did for a living, learning the trade from Joseph, obeying Joseph and respecting Joseph as a son ought to obey his father.

Finally, we are told that Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature. He grew and matured. Jesus grew in wisdom. That's not just knowledge. Once again this is understanding, and here it would not only refer to His

understanding of Scriptures, but understanding people, understanding life, understanding the path that lay before Him.

Why this text, this message from the Holy Spirit on the Sunday after Christmas? With Christmas we are meditating on the wonder of grace found in the incarnation of the Son of God. This message helps us understand what that entailed, what that meant for Jesus, and what it means for us. Remember that verse from our epistle lesson: *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death, He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil.”* (Hebrew 2:14) In order to save us from sin and death the Son of God couldn't just appear to be human, or merely take on human form, as He had done on occasion in the Old Testament. No, He had to share in the same. This was true not just for part of His life, but for the entire 33 years He spent serving us as our Savior, fulfilling the law as our substitute, and finally offering Himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Now as our exalted Lord, He remains true Man forevermore.

Without doubt we ought to conclude “What an Amazing Boy!” It is even more fitting for us to conclude, “What an Amazing Savior!”

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.