

Rev. Dan Welch 2nd Sunday after Christmas 1-5-20 Text- Luke 2:40-52

What do you think Jesus like when He was a boy? I think all of us are curious and would really like to know more than we do about Jesus' childhood and His growing up in Galilee. I'm sure that most parents with young children would probably like to know what it would be like to raise a perfect, sinless child. Imagine a child whose twos were not *terrible*- no temper tantrums, no refusing to go to bed, no fights with his siblings. Young people want to know about Jesus when he was a teenager. What kind of music did He listen to? Was he "like really religious?" Did He have pimples? All that the Gospel writer Luke gives us is that at the age of twelve Jesus was at home in the temple with the teachers, listening attentively, asking intelligent questions, amazing them with the depth of His insight and understanding, and that He was obedient to His parents.

Luke doesn't give us anything more about what Jesus was like growing up. We can assume that if there was anything more that we *needed* to know, Luke would have told us.

His silence seems to indicate that Jesus grew up just like any other boy in Nazareth, playing with the kids in the neighborhood, helping out at home, learning His father's carpentry business, all without the stain of sin. This is the last we hear of quiet Joseph. Maybe he died, and Jesus took on the responsibilities of the oldest son. We just don't know. Luke sums up the silent years of Jesus' life this way, though: "He increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man." The carpenter's son. Mary and Joseph's boy. "A good kid," the neighbors would say. "Never got into trouble. Except for that one time when His parents couldn't find Him for three whole days. But then, that wasn't His fault."

The word that is written across this entire episode is "obedience." St. Paul writes in Philippians that having taken on our humanity, Jesus became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Even here, at the age of twelve, Jesus is the obedient Son of His Father, and of His parents. His obedience took Him to death on a cross, so that we who are disobedient can share in His perfect Sonship.

Jesus grew up in the home of good and faithful parents. Joseph fulfilled His duties as the head of the family and faithfully kept the requirement that every male was to appear at the temple in Jerusalem for the Passover. Mary went with her husband, even though she was not required to go. In Mary and Joseph we have a couple of fine examples for true fatherhood and motherhood-

husband and wife helping each other remain faithful, and raising their children to be faithful to God.

Mary and Joseph traveled some sixty miles to Jerusalem in a caravan of friends and relatives from Nazareth. There was greater safety in large numbers. So it isn't surprising that no one noticed that a twelve year old was missing when the group headed back north to Nazareth. Everyone assumed Jesus was with someone else, probably off playing with his cousins. It wasn't until they had traveled a full day that they realized Jesus wasn't with them.

Parents who have suffered the trauma of a missing child know that frantic feeling that Mary and Joseph must have felt at that moment. Panic, dread, and fear. 'Was he safe? What could have happened to Him?' They imagined the worst. Where could He have gone? There's guilt and shame. 'We should have kept a better eye on Him. Why didn't we take a head count before we left? We should have been more careful.' Now, multiply those feelings by at least one hundred when you consider that the missing twelve year old is the Messiah, the Son of God! Think of the responsibility resting on Mary and Joseph's shoulders. They lost God's Son! Now what?

The worried parents turned around and hurried back to Jerusalem. They searched up and down the streets and alleyways of Jerusalem, calling out His name, asking people. For two frantic days they looked, and on the third day they found Jesus safe and sound in the temple courtyard, sitting quietly with the teachers of the temple, listening attentively and asking the kinds of questions one wouldn't expect out of a twelve year old kid. Why didn't Mary and Joseph think of looking in the temple first, we wonder. But then how often do **we** look in church for Jesus when we're in a panic?

The first thing Mary does after finding Jesus in the temple is chew Him out for having gone missing. "How could you do this to us? Your father and I have been looking all over for you!" It's a typical panicked mother's reaction. But Jesus is gentle and respectful to Mary, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Jesus was obedient first of all to His Father. His work was to do the will of Him who sent Him. He had to be about His Father's business. That business involved teaching the people the Word of God, and so we shouldn't be surprised to learn that even before He reached the age of 13, when He would have been acknowledged by the rabbis, Jesus was with the teachers. A child was instructing His elders. I wonder, did they have any idea that they were being taught by God Himself in the unlikely form of a twelve year old boy? At any rate, back to Mary's reaction to when they finally found Jesus: Jesus didn't

use the occasion to dishonor His parents. He respectfully reminded them that His Father was God, and He had come to do **His** will.

For a brief moment of motherly panic, Mary forgot who Jesus' Father **actually** was. And forgetting, she looked for Him in all the wrong places. Had she remembered the words of the angel and the shepherds, she might have looked first in His Father's house. If that happens so easily with the mother of our Lord, how much more easily does it happen to you and me? When we panic, when there is a health crisis for someone we love, when our own life is a mess, when our kids are sick or missing or living recklessly, when our job or our school work seem **so** overwhelming, we forget who Jesus is, who His Father (and our Father) is, and we forget where He is to be found. We go running around looking all over for a savior, like Mary and Joseph searching Jerusalem for Jesus.

We forget that this humble Savior who comes in such a gentle way as a baby in a manger, a twelve year old in the temple, is the Lord of all creation. We forget that this is God's only-begotten Son, God come down from heaven in human flesh. We frantically search all over for Him, in our hearts, in our heads, in our feelings. We look everywhere but where He promised to be for us, in God's temple, where the Word is preached and taught, where Baptism and Holy Absolution and the Lord's Supper are being given out in His Name, in the Church. That is His temple, the place where His glory dwells. He is right here, in His Father's house, among His Father's things, doing exactly what you would expect to find Him doing as God's Son.

Please don't be fooled by outward appearances. The teachers in the temple that day sure were. The words that come from Jesus' mouth completely amazed the experts. The twelve year old boy in the temple is the Christ and God Almighty. Don't be fooled by the humility of His Word, the Bible, the plainness of preaching, the beautiful simplicity of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. **That's** where Jesus is found! There's no need to wander far and wide searching for Him.

Luke says that when they returned to Nazareth, Jesus was obedient to His parents. This was part of His work of keeping the Law perfectly for us. Even though He's the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, He doesn't consider it too low to be obedient to His parents. When Joseph asked Him sweep up the wood shavings in his carpenter's shop, He did just that. When Mary asked Him to take out the garbage, help with dinner, He did those things joyfully, lovingly, perfectly. Once again we're reminded on this Second Sunday after Christmas the lengths and depths to which God has gone to reach down to

us and to save us. The Word became Flesh. God became an (obedient) adolescent, for us.

When we think that our obedience to our parents and our other earthly authorities means nothing and that it's beneath our dignity, we have God in the form of a twelve year old boy to remind us that God is pleased when children honor their parents, their God-given authority. We also become painfully aware of how far we have fallen short of the 4th commandment's standards, how we don't honor and obey God's representatives like we should, how we chafe when we have an authority over us. We must confess that we are disobedient and rebellious children. (and...)

It is precisely here that Jesus' perfect obedience provides a comfort for us. He became obedient where we are disobedient. He was the perfect child of His parents, the obedient Son of His Father in heaven where we are not. He gives us His perfect obedience as a free gift. It's like having an older brother who never did anything wrong, who takes all the blame for the bad things that we do, and who gives us all the credit for the good things He did.

Jesus had been unfairly scolded by His mother in the temple when He was twelve. He had been innocent. He was only doing what His Father in heaven had given Him to do. On the cross He was punished for sins that were not His own. And that too was the Father's will: that His sinless Son should become our sin, so that we might stand sinless before God.

That's the answer to the question, "What Was Jesus Like?" as a child, He was obedient. That's the same way He was throughout His whole earthly life. On this second Sunday after Christmas, we remember our Lord when He was twelve years old in the temple- obedient to His Father, obedient to His parents, obedient to death on a cross. His perfect obedience means that we can joyfully and confidently be about our lives- our Father's business- with all the freedom of a Twelve Year Old in the temple. Amen