

December 27, 2009
Christmas 1

“Peace in the Childhood of Jesus”

LUKE 2:41-52

Every year his parents went 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 After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” ⁴⁹ “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

If you do a computer search on a famous person, you will usually find more than enough information on that person, including their early life and childhood. How different it is with Jesus. The only information about his childhood and early life comes from these words just read to you from the gospel of Luke. Even though little is told us about Jesus’ childhood, what is told to us is of extreme value to us this morning, especially when we reflect on our own childhood experiences.

Why is Jesus’ childhood so important to us? His childhood days offer us the free gift of a perfect life, a perfect life that we never lived when we were growing up as children. If God were to judge you on judgment day on the basis of how we lived when we were three, or ten, or sixteen, we know that our lives were far from what God expected of us. Think of how some of the bad or sinful things we did to our parents or to a brother or sister haunt us later on in life? Today we want to look at the perfect life Jesus lived in Nazareth. That perfect life is our hope of being accepted and loved by our God in this life and for all eternity.

A religious family

Jesus grew up in a very religious family. “Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.” When it came time for the Passover, the family of Jesus packed up their bags and made the long trip to Jerusalem from Nazareth about 70 miles. While in Jerusalem they celebrated the Passover meal with family and friends. They went to the temple where they saw the priests offer animal sacrifices that pictured the future sacrifice Jesus would make for the sins of the world.

Why is that dedication of Jesus and his family so important to you and me this morning? Look back at your childhood. There were times when you looked forward to being in church and reading your Bible and growing closer to the Lord. Then there were the other times when you started cutting corners with the Lord, and maybe there were even times when you went for weeks or even months without seriously reading the Bible. Where you and I have failed, Jesus was perfect. It was his plan to offer his perfect life to his Father and have it credited in your account and mine. Galatians 4 tells us, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." Jesus kept the law perfectly in our place so we might receive the full rights of sons.

Jesus' love for his Father's house

Now let's look more closely at how much Jesus loved being close to the Scriptures. It says, "After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it." Jesus stayed behind. He wanted more time in his Father's house talking to people about the Scriptures. Usually at about the age of twelve, Jewish boys began studying God's Word more intensely to prepare themselves for future roles of leadership in their congregations. At first glance Jesus was no different than other Jewish boys of his time as they studied under teachers of the law as they deepened their knowledge of Scriptures. But upon further examination we see Jesus' love for the Scriptures and his Father's house was pure and perfect. Later he would tell his disciples that his love for his Father's house consumed him.

Some of the best moments in life are those moments we find time to be alone with the Lord in his Word. The Word of God brings us a peace this world cannot give. Colossians 3 encourages us, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts towards God." Let Jesus set the example for us as we begin a new year, to spend more time with our heavenly Father in his Word. We are branches connected to Jesus the vine and we have the love for our heavenly Father that Jesus also had.

Distraught parents

What we see next are some very distraught parents. "Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions." They are one day out from Jerusalem, perhaps about 15 miles, and they cannot find Jesus. Does this not show the confidence they placed in Jesus to be with relatives and friends and not run off as some kids might do, especially if they are not getting along with their parents? Where is Jesus? What happened to him? Nobody knew where he was, so they went back to Jerusalem.

Where would you start looking if your child was lost? Would you look in school, at a friend's house, relatives, or a favorite playground? Where would you start looking for Jesus if you were Mary and Joseph? Would you look in the market place where people sell things? Would you look where other children were playing? Would you check the homes of other

relatives if they lived in Jerusalem? Can't you see the people shrug their shoulders when they tell them they are looking for a twelve year old boy who is lost? Boys will be boys. It almost seems as if the last place they looked is where they should have begun their search, in the temple of Jerusalem. Then they see Jesus in the temple courts. They watch in amazement as he sits among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions. No one ever listened better to the Word of God as it was taught, and no one ever did a better job of offering insights into the Word of the Lord.

Some of the greatest artists in the world have captured this moment on canvass. They often show Jesus sitting among the scholars with some asking him questions and others examining the ancient scrolls to determine if Jesus was speaking the truth. Just as the shepherds and wise men were astonished when they saw the baby Jesus, these religious teachers are astonished at his knowledge of Scripture, his depth of understanding, and his ability to teach in such a loving and kind way. The Greek word used here is one that can be literally translated as "standing outside of your self."

It is used several times to describe the astonishment people had when they saw Jesus perform a miracle. I find it interesting that Jesus had to grow in his knowledge of the Scriptures during his childhood years but on this occasion he displays an amazing knowledge of Scripture.

Mary does not handle the situation very well as she chides Jesus with the following words, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." Mary is not the first parent to overact and say something bad when frustrated with a child. In the future she would kneel beneath the cross of Jesus and watch as he died for her sins, including the times when Jesus was overacted as a parent. Don't be too harsh on her this morning. Think of the times you have not always reprimanded your children in a godly way. We need the perfect life Jesus lived and the perfect death he died for all those moments we have failed as faithful and patient parents with our children.

Jesus perfect answer to his mother

How does Jesus handle this situation? Listen to the way he corrects his mother by speaking the truth in love to her. "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Here was a time when Jesus had the opportunity to show his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, that very special relationship he had to his heavenly Father. Later in his life Jesus would speak to large crowds of people about his Father in such a way that they would immediately realize he was claiming that he was the very Son.

We are told that Jesus returned to Nazareth and was obedient to his earthly parents. Were you always obedient to your earthly parents? Remember those days after Christmas when you were home from school and you started fighting with each other. Your mother told you to stop, but you still kept fighting. Remember those days they asked you to do something for them, and you didn't listen to them. Remember those teenage years when you even talked back or disappointed them in the rebellious way you lived your life. Psalm 27 begins with the words, "The Lord is my light and my salvation" but then the psalmist confesses "Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD."

Jesus was perfect as he grew up in Nazareth. It says that "He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." At his baptism the heavenly Father would put his stamp of approval on Jesus' perfect life with these words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It says that Mary treasured all these things in her heart. Literally the Greek word says that she kept them thoroughly in her heart. Go home today, treasuring what you have heard about the childhood of Jesus. Let it bring you the peace of knowing that through his perfect childhood and perfect life that was pleasing to God, you are accepted by God and precious to him in this life and for all eternity. Amen.