

Christmas 2

The Twelve-year-old God

01-05-25

Luke 2:40-52

In addition to the familiar Christmas narrative: “*and she gave birth to her firstborn son and laid him in a manger*”, Luke tells us of Jesus’ circumcision and naming on the 8th day, and then about His required presentation and redemption at the temple when He was 40 days old.

Matthew tells us of the visit of the Magi, the hasty flight to Egypt to escape evil King Herod, and the return to Nazareth where Jesus lived as the son of a carpenter. And with the notable exception of our reading today, that’s it for the first 30 years of Jesus’ life.

Perhaps more astounding than this: is that there is nothing else unusual that the Bible reports regarding Jesus’ childhood.

You’d expect holiness to stick out like a sore thumb, wouldn’t you? You’d expect that when the eternal Word becomes Flesh, when the Son of God makes His appearance in this world, there would be something obviously “different” about Him. You’d expect to be able to pick Jesus out of a crowd: “Yup, there He is. Over there. The one smiting the kid who stole his pencil or dunking on everyone in basketball.” You’d at least expect Him to be such a good kid that everyone would wonder what was “wrong” with Him.

What’s it like to be 12 and sinless? We’ll never know. We’re born in Adam’s sin. That’s why we baptize little ones. They are born with the inherited disease of Sin, that gives rise to the symptoms: sins. But not Jesus. His mother is Mary but His father is God. Jesus is human without the stain of Sin. And the unusual thing about it is that nobody really notices. Granted, the

teachers are amazed at His wisdom, which seems well beyond His years. But the really amazing thing is that *they are amazed*, presumably because Jesus was indistinguishable from every other 12-year-old in Jerusalem! It seems so odd, but I will say: have you ever got people mad at you even when you did the right thing? So I think there was plenty of room for people (as the pharisees accuse the adult Jesus) to THINK he was a sinner – “did you see what he did or said?!” Not knowing the whole story and that he actually did what was right.

But we know, by the testimony of the scriptures and his resurrection from the dead – don’t forget that – that he did not sin.

Even in this quirky account.

Which we may raise an eyebrow at, because Mary and Joseph were frantic that day, as they searched high and low, looking for Jesus. “Surely he disobeyed them or did something mischievous to be held back, certainly he didn’t do all he could to reassure his parents that he was just fine in the temple until they got back to him. It couldn’t have been miscommunication, it couldn’t have been that he had no way of getting a message to them...” or maybe it was. Maybe the family left the temple, like any of us thinking the child was with the other parent or that uncle... that’s not the child’s fault is it? And what do we say to the lost children? Go wandering around Jerusalem? Or get safe and stay put?

And so yes, he gets a talking to, but that doesn’t mean he was in the wrong... In fact, I think the text is given to us, in the narrative, why? To show us a *shortcoming* of this God-boy? Or to show

his, while hidden, but his divine goodness. And if that is true then what He says is true, even at 12 years old, “It was necessary for me to be in my Father’s house.”

Is this an act of pre-teen rebellion against his parents? Or is this a statement of who He is, and why he has come?

Here we then begin to see how this quirky account might be important for your salvation and your faith.

First of all, it shows that Jesus lived under God’s Law and obeyed it perfectly for you and me. He was obedient to His Father in Heaven, sitting, even as the Wisdom of God made flesh, at the feet of the teachers of the law in the Father’s house. As the author of Hebrews writes, He is faithful in all of God’s house. But, in addition to this: He was obedient to His earthly father (and mother) as well, under the 4th commandment, and their house. Though He was their Lord, He obeyed them as their son. Think of it. The Lord of all became subject to his parents, lived under their authority, obeyed them. When they said, “clean your room,” He did it. When they said, “Take out the trash,” He took out the trash. And He did it with love and honor and respect. Obedient and submissive under both houses: God and man, even as he grew in stature in both houses: God and man.

Yes, today we learn of our Saviors submission, that he might do perfectly what we cannot, fulfilling the law of God. Which is good news, because, we, in God’s house, fail. We have doubts, fears, and sins. And even in our earthly father’s houses (our families) we fail. We have

strained relationships, grudges, wounds... So thanks be to God for the faithful One, Jesus, who is faithful in both houses. He will uphold the law, he will be the unfailing and perfect sacrifice to forgive and save us all.

Today we learn that Jesus embodies what it means to be human. To be sure, He is also God, but in the mystery of the incarnation, He is also a human being. The phrase: “to err is human...” is wrong. Never think it is human to sin. It is not. We sin because we have a disease that doesn't belong to our human nature. That sin disease bubbles up into our thoughts, words, and actions. Make no mistake: Jesus is fully human. Jesus in His humanity is what God wanted for all human beings. Growing up in a household, growing up under parents, going through the womb, through infancy, childhood, adolescence. Learning, playing, working. Jesus is perfectly and completely human. He is our brother in every stage, even to death! And he is faithful in all of them... Could this then, be the One to restore us from our fallen humanity? Yes!

Today we learn that Jesus knows what it's like to be one of us. He really is Emanuel – God with Us, and “with us” in glory and miracles, but not always. Today we also learn he is with us often times so hiddenly, so humbly, that we would not have even noticed Him. A manger, a cross. A child. A teenager. A man. He is one of us. He embraces your life in all its humanity. In lowliness. Not always in a dramatic miracle or beam of light falling on us.

God works in our reading hiddenly and humbly. He appears to be just another 12-year-old in the temple. A precociously bright 12-year-old, yes. A theologically engaged 12-year-old, certainly. In

our text, God is a 12-year-old whose parents momentarily lost him. We would have lost Him in the crowd, too.

And God still works this way today. In the Word, so confusing at times, a little dry at times in those genealogies... but so powerful in its testimony that God is real, a Savior has come, and life is ours! God works even more, hidden in Water and Bread and Wine, with that Same Word, the gifts of the Cross come to us! Just like with this boy, yes: In Baptism, the Word, and Lord's Supper there is something more than meets our eyes and our senses. God is there, at work to bring the gifts of the cross to us. And this is his promise. The word of the 12 year old Jesus was true, is his word now, ("This is my body, this is my blood...") still true? Yes.

So take heart, In Jesus, the law has been fulfilled, and in his sacrifice his obedience becomes yours. To make you a member of good standing in the House of the Father by His Cross. Take heart, Jesus is risen! Which means humanity has been restored, death and sin no longer define Him, or his people of the resurrection. And make no mistake – that is you. Do you have ears? Hear! Receive his gifts from the cross. Rest and rejoice in them. In Jesus' name. Amen.