**12/30/18**

**Newborn to 12 Year Old**

**Luke 2:41-52**

Merry Christmas!

“let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.”

(Put Santa Hat on) We have a lot of traditions and characters we believe in that unfortunately seem to have an end date of Christmas. Santa, The Elf on the Shelf, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Frosty The Snowman, Ebenezer Scrooge, and The Grinch have carried out their duties and the movies, shows, and displays have ended. These characters have been put away or have gone into hiding until next year. (Throw or Hide Santa Hat)

Christmas allows for thoughtful shopping, cool gifts, and family time. All of those are very important. However, I think in the hustle and bustle of things, whether we are cutting someone off for a prime parking space, or making sure that no one cuts in front of us in line we are not acting in a very Christian-like manner. At times we need to be reminded, or we need to refocus on the reason for the season. We were blessed with the ultimate gift of our Lord and Savior being born in a manger, and what is even more awesome about that is that we did not have to do anything to be blessed with this gift.

Some of you may already know that today is actually the First Sunday of Christmas in the church calendar, and some of you may have realized it when you grabbed your bulletins before church. Christmas is not just a one day and done experience. Next week we might wrap things up with Epiphany, but what was really cool was that in 2018 we as a church got the chance to focus on Keeping Christmas Every Day. We got to experience it with beautiful music from our choir, Lego displays from Pastor Leah, and so many other things throughout the year.

So, one may be asking themselves why is it that we get today’s Gospel Reading right after we just got to celebrate the birth of Jesus? It just seems like it was the other day that the Wise Men followed the star to the manger in order to find Him in the very first King Sized bed.

Well, first off I am not too sure there is much to be said about changing dirty diapers, the all too taboo topic of breast-feeding in public, or all the crying and other stuff that go along with a child while they are growing up. Now, I recognize that He is our Lord and Savior, but come on! Give me a break if you were really expecting to hear much before the first major stand that this 12- year-old took against His earthly parents.

Now, the question is… was it a stand in defiance?

**OR**

Was it just a showing that Jesus was coming into His own by growing in wisdom and stature in favor with God and humankind?

Let us explore more as we try to break down and figure out today’s Gospel Reading together! Yes, I said together… so, with that in mind it is your turn to help me out here and answer some questions. Yes, that means we are gonna make things a little interactive this morning. Now, don’t be slinking down in your pew and hiding from me. This is a safe zone and we won’t laugh at you if you answer something wrong. We will simply continue exploring to find the right answer to fit our puzzle.

With the questions in mind that I just presented a little bit ago to try and set the stage, let’s start things off with simple questions that just require you to raise your hand in acknowledgement.

How many of you are parents here?

Okay, now keep your hands raised please.

For those of you that don’t have your hand raised…

Have you ever had the blessing of babysitting?

If so, then you can raise your hands too!

Now, look around and see how many people have their hands raised. I think it is fair to say that every one of us has been in a parental role at some point or another in our lives whether we recognize or admit to it or not.

With that being said… let me ask you a few more questions.

What are your thoughts or feelings about the Gospel today?

Did you experience any feelings of anger, confusion, concern, or perhaps even frustration?

Maybe just one or two things kind of caught you off-guard, and maybe nothing did and we need to wake you up in your pew!

For those of us that had particular feelings towards today’s Gospel Reading, what was it that you found yourself questioning or more concerned about?

That Jesus’ parents traveled a day’s journey after leaving the festival of the Passover until they even realized he was not in the group of travelers?

**OR**

That it took them three days to find Him?

**How about…**

That he was somewhat disrespectful to them, and even acted like they should have known where he was all along?

I personally am not a parent. However, I have babysat my nieces and friend’s children many of times in the past. All I can say is that at 12 years old… Son of God or not… I am not sure I would have been able to keep my cool. Whether some sharp words would have come out in a disciplinary manner, or I would have begun my famous countdown, I sure know that young man woulda knew I meant business when I found Him. He would have also felt the grace, love, and acceptance of the Prodigal Son as my fear and worry turned into love and forgiveness.

If you all can agree to any of that give me a head nod or Amen!

I guess I need to pray for forgiveness for all of us, and we all need to repent now, as we are talking about Jesus and His behavior as a young man growing up. Nope, that’s not the case. What we can do is sit here and debate right and wrong all day, but the fact that we are debating it is one of many reasons we gather together as a congregation. We are called to explore the readings and stories together in order to gain more insight, and not just expect to sit in the pew and listen to yet another sermon prepared by Pastor Leah or Vince. As a matter of fact, we can even walk out of here still talking about and processing today’s Gospel Reading with one another. That is the cool part about our faith and things that occurred 2000 or so years ago!

You have heard enough of my mindset today for sure. So, I am gonna change things up a bit as we explore some of a famous author’s mindset in relation to this Gospel Reading today. Back on January 12th, 1981, John Piper wrote a sermon and shared some interesting thoughts and information in regards to the things we are discussing and contemplating today.

Verse 42: "And when he was 12 years old they went up according to the custom." The fact that this incident happened when Jesus was 12 is probably significant. The 12th year was the final year of preparation for a lad before he entered full participation in the religious life of the synagogue. Up until that time his parents, especially his father, were teaching him the commandments of the law, but at the end of the 12th year the child goes through a ceremony by which he formally takes on the yoke of the law and becomes a bar mitzvah or "son of the commandment." This was the year Jesus chose to stay behind in the temple. Perhaps, at this crucial turning point in every Jewish boy's life, Jesus wanted to demonstrate subtly for those who had eyes to see that he would be more than an ordinary Jewish bar mitzvah; his insight into the commandment was more profound than ordinary men, and his relation to God was unique. Both of these will be evident in a moment.

Verses 43, 44: "And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey." Two things stand out here, and they seem inconsistent. First, there is Jesus' apparent disregard for his parents' time and feelings. Second, there is implicit faith Mary and Joseph have in their 12-year-old son. If he had been an irresponsible child, his parents would never have gone a whole day without knowing his whereabouts. They trusted him and knew he had good judgment. This suggests that Jesus' motive in staying behind was not carelessness or disrespect. Evidently he intentionally let them go in order to demonstrate something more forcefully.

Verses 46, 47: "They found him in the temple sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." This sentence sets my mind to thinking about all sorts of things I'd love to talk about for hours. One is the relationship between teachers and students and the role of listening, querying, and answering. Another is the mystery of how the divine and human natures unite in the one person, Jesus. If he is God, how can he increase in wisdom, as verse 52 says he does? Finally, this sentence sparks in my mind a scene 18 years later when perhaps some of these very same teachers would gnash their teeth at this boy's wisdom and want to kill him.

Verses 48–50: And when they (his parents) saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold your father and I have been looking for you anxiously (literally: in pain)." And he said to them: "Why is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house (or about his business)?" And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them.

The last statement—that they did not understand Jesus—is Luke's way of saying to us the reader: "There's more here than meets the eye. This is the point, don't miss it.” They were searching and searching and finally they turn him up at the temple. Where did they search? In the playground, the local swimming hole, in the shops, at the bakery? Jesus answers: You shouldn't have had to seek at all. For you know, don't you, that there is laid on me an inner necessity to be in my Father's house (or about his business—either translation is possible)?

The main point of the whole passage probably lies in the contrast between "your father" and "my father." Mary says, "Your father and I have been searching for you." Jesus answers, "You should have known I would be at the house of my Father." In other words, Jesus has chosen this crucial stage in his life, on the brink of manhood, to tell his parents in an unforgettable way that he now knows who his real Father is and what it will mean for his mission. It will mean, as Simeon said in, "a sword will pierce through your own soul also, Mary." The time will come when Jesus will be killed at Jerusalem, and after three days rise from the dead, and that will be a great pain to Mary. And is not this three-day vigil of Mary and Joseph a foreshadowing of that experience? She said, "Your father and I have been seeking you in pain."

So it seems to me that the main teaching of the passage is that Jesus now recognizes his unique sonship to God, and that his mission will require of him a devotion to God's purposes so great that it takes precedence over the closest family ties. He must follow his calling, even if it brings pain and misunderstanding. In this way Luke sets the stage for the adult ministry of the Son of God.

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