

The Obedient Child: Did He know?

Advent Midweek #2 – 12/08/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Luke 2:41-52 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 52 **“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”**

Introduction

✘ Again the overall series for our midweek Advent sermon series is *“When Heaven Met Earth,”* which is, after all, what Advent is all about – when the Son of God came to earth as a flesh-and-blood human being. Advent also speaks of when that same Son of God will return on the Day of Glory from heaven to earth to call His faithful believers home to heaven and send the faithless to eternal condemnation.

→ The sub-line for this series is *“Advent Answers to Hard Questions Hardly Anybody Is Asking”*. The question that prompted this entire series is the one that we address tonight. It was a confirmation student that first asked the question, “When Jesus was our age, did He know that He was God?”

→ We find the answer in our Gospel Reading tonight, as we see Jesus in the temple as “The Obedient Child”.

I. His Parents Did What Parents Should Do

✘ This text is one of the only brief looks we receive into Jesus’ life as a young boy; a very interesting story of a family journey to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover.

→ While it might seem on the surface that Jesus’ earthly parents, Mary and Joseph were a little inattentive toward their son, because they didn’t even notice He was missing from their group for an entire day, we need to understand that this was a different culture than we’re used to and a different day and age. This was nothing like a parent leaving his/her child in the car in a mall parking lot while going in to do the Christmas shopping, or leaving for a Christmas vacation in Paris, France like the movie *Home Alone* where they left one of the children behind at home.

✘ To the contrary, Jesus’ earthly parents did what parents should do so that their children know God. Honestly, beyond the miracle and majesty of His birth, we know almost nothing about the boy Jesus. But we do know from the verses immediately before our text in Luke 2 that Joseph and Mary were faithful parents and obedient to the Law of God. They dutifully and piously had Jesus circumcised when He was eight days old and then brought Him to the temple when He was forty days old for the rite of purification.

→ Let me just say, “Thanks be to God!” for those parents who have as a high priority their (or your!) children’s spiritual welfare; who bring your babies for Baptism; who teach them about the Lord God from the earliest of ages; making Sunday School and worship the first priority and are committed to nurture them and grow them in the fear and love of God.

✘ After the rite of purification we know that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus had to flee for a time to Egypt but then returned to their hometown of Nazareth, where Luke 2:40 tells us, “the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon Him”.

→ A quick note about that phrase, “favor of God”: the same thing was said to Jesus’ mother, Mary, by the angel Gabriel, in Luke 1:30. The bottom line of this phrase in Scripture is it means that there is something very special going on; a special “God-thing” that not everyone comprehends; but it’s special nevertheless. And it’s about to unfold through this miraculous birth and life.

II. Was Jesus REALLY Obedient at 12?

- ✘ Obviously a baby doesn't stay a baby forever. A baby grows, toddles, walks, talks, learns to read and write. So did Jesus as a natural human child. Watching children grow and develop from stage to stage is always a wonderful miracle to watch.
 - ➔ What we know about Jesus was that He was fit and healthy and hearty in body, mind, and spirit. As far as we are told in Scripture Jesus lived a normal life ... whatever that meant in His day.
- ✘ And then in our Gospel Reading tonight we meet Jesus again at age 12 in the Jerusalem temple. I bet many of you have questions when you hear that story. Maybe you've wondered, "If Jesus was such an obedient child, then why didn't He go with the rest of the family returning from Jerusalem to Nazareth?" Or "if Jesus was such an obedient child, as verse 51 says, then why did He cause His parents such consternation - for three days, no less?"
 - ➔ Can you imagine how you'd feel if you were the parent or grandparent of a lost child for that amount of time? Is this really the kind of behavior we should expect to see if Jesus knew He was God? What about loving and honoring your parents?

III. His parents' knowledge was incomplete

- ✘ And speaking of Mary and Joseph, as they are trying to raise this child according to the law and tradition of their faith, did they really know He was God? Luke 1:35 says that the angel told Mary He would be called the Son of God. But did she fully understand "what child is this?" What parent ever really knows what their children will mature and grow up to be in adulthood?
 - ➔ It's significant that twice in Luke 2 – first on the evening of Jesus' birth (v. 19) and then, after the occasion at the temple twelve years later (v. 51) – we're told that Mary "treasured" or "pondered" those things in her heart. I'm sure it's safe to assume that Mary's mind often wandered back to the big events in her time with Jesus; like the time the angel visited her, and when she gave birth in a stable, as well as all those years when He was growing. There's no doubt that she would remember finding Jesus here in the temple, and wondered and treasured in her heart, what this child would be ... and even who He really was!
 - ➔ So, was her knowledge incomplete? No doubt. Even many years later, when Jesus had grown to be a man; when everybody was asking, "Could this really be the Messiah?" – even when His own disciples and followers didn't know fully who He was Mary had to wonder still more. Scripture says that Mary, once or twice tried to keep her adult Son from His mission; that she said, in essence (as family members are fond of saying to one another), "Don't embarrass the family". So surely now, when He was only 12, Mary and Joseph had to have questions about whether or not Jesus was God.

IV. Jesus Knew He was God

- ✘ Now we come to our original question: When Jesus was growing up as a child and then as an adolescent, did He know that He was God? Did this young boy know what He was doing and what was in store for Him? Did He know that He would fulfill the prophets of the Old Testament; that He was, indeed, the promised Messiah? If so, wouldn't that be a burden too big for any twelve-year-old's shoulders?
 - ➔ Let's allow Jesus to speak for Himself in verse 49, "Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" That's why He was at the temple. And He made it crystal clear to His parents that yes, He knew! He knew He was the Son of God and He knew that He must be about His

Father's business in heaven. He knew why He had come to earth; that His was a mission of salvation and so yes, He knew that He was a special, one-and-only, uniquely and altogether man and God!

- ✘ And you see, that then explains what we might mistakenly think of as disobedient behavior. He was obedient to His parents – respectful or “submissive to them” as verse 51 says. It's just that they had incorrectly assumed that He should be leaving Jerusalem with the crowds, though they had never instructed Him to do so. And Jesus knew He had a job to do; a job that was centered here in the temple.

→ So yes, because Jesus was always God from the time of His conception, that meant He was always omniscient (all-knowing), and therefore Jesus absolutely did know He was God.

V. Jesus Was Obedient to Death

- ✘ But there are still parts of this that you and I as mere human beings; as creatures of the One and only Creator, will never be able to fully understand. Such as the amazing fact that this all-knowing Son of God nevertheless still learned things as verse 52 mentions that He “increased in wisdom”.

→ Certainly it is part of what we call Jesus' state of humiliation during His time on earth. While He was here He didn't always use His divine powers, perhaps even His power to know everything.

→ But without a doubt He used His godly powers when it served His purpose of saving us, yet even then not always to the fullest. His earthly suffering in the Garden and at the cross were very real – to the extreme in fact!

- ✘ That's why we see Him today in the temple asking questions of the teachers. Jesus learned the same way you and I do: by studying and asking hard questions about Holy Scripture.

→ And from the Old Testament Scriptures, Jesus learned one thing in particular. Hebrews 5:8 says, “Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered”. Jesus, Paul writes in Philippians 2:8, became “obedient to death, even death on a cross” as the full and final payment for the sins of the world. Our Epistle reading tonight refers to that salvation work, according to the eternal plan of God the Father when it says that Jesus was “subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him” (1 Cor. 15:28).

- ✘ Saving the entire world by conquering sin, death and devil; that's what the Scriptures promised the Messiah would do. And Jesus learned His lesson well; perhaps some of it in the temple that day.

→ When Jesus was a boy, did He know that He was God? Absolutely and irrevocably. And so do we, for this is Advent, and the Advent message is that God became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14) in the Son of God, born to Mary.

→ In His name; along with the Father and the Holy Spirit belongs all the glory. Amen.