

Luke 2:40-52
Second Sunday after Christmas
January 4, 2026

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Second Sunday after the Christmas festival always focuses us on Jesus' childhood. And the one and only picture of his adolescence that the Scripture grants us is the account we hear this morning of his journey to Jerusalem and his three days in the temple.

Before we get into the details of that, consider for a moment the Scripture's *entire* testimony of Jesus' childhood – limited to his birth, his presentation in the temple in infancy, the visit of the magi and his flight to Egypt, and his visit to the temple at the age of 12. What would you remember about a child if those were the only pictures you had of him... if that was the "scrapbook" of His youth? How would you summarize those memories? (Because that theoretical is, in truth, what we have with Jesus) - would it not be summarized by two truths: (1) Him being worshiped or hated by men, and (2) Him being associated with the temple.

At the 'big-picture' level, isn't that what we are to remember of Jesus' childhood? This child was true God, returning to His temple and fulfilling all of its Old Covenant promises in His new covenant

body... that body of the God-man, who is worshiped and rejected by men, as John's gospel says, "He came to His own, and his own people did not receive him, but to all who did receive him, who believed on His name, He gave them the right to become children of God."

Now, if that's the summary of His childhood "scrapbook" and all four pictures of it, then what do we make specifically of this last 'picture'? This only picture after about 10 years of Scriptural silence during Jesus' childhood *and* the only picture for another 18 years of Scriptural silence on his young adulthood? What do we make of this hinge – the only image we have – of roughly 28 years of Jesus' life? (Yes, that's how important this text and this picture is!)

This unique picture also has, if you will, a pretty unique picture *frame*. Or, as I've called it before – bookends. The bookends are the two verses at beginning and end of the text that *frame* the picture in a repeated thought and, thus, one *common* thought that guides this text: from the beginning of this text, "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him." And, the same thought, the same *framing*, with the other bookend: "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."

If we had to sum up those bookends and their framing of this text in one thought, it might be this one phrase: the humanity of God. Much like the cloths at Jesus' birth, these two verses swaddle the whole text in the wondrous truth that (as the Creed humbly

marvels) “He became man.” And, of course, the antecedent to that pronoun - “He” – is God of God, light of light, very God of very God. Yes, not *just* “He became man,” but that truly means “God became man.” That’s a truth we must never forget, nor (even at the end of the Christmas season) tire of hearing. For, all of salvation history, all of human history, is centered on this mysterious wonder.

But, as soon as we hear those words, “He became man,” and as soon as we consider that He was in our human likeness sharing, we like to compare ourselves to Jesus. So, we look to put ourselves into the text, and if there’s *any* rightful place to do that here, it is to compare our humanity to Christ’s. If he – even in his perfection – grew in wisdom and knowledge of the Lord – shouldn’t you, in your *imperfection*, strive for the same? Why do we sinners always think we know so much and need so little instruction when the perfect man still grew in wisdom and knowledge? Consider that: perfection does not mean omniscience. God is not omniscient because He’s perfect, but because He’s God! Adam was perfect, but God still had to give him instruction regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he (Adam) still had to hand that down to his perfect wife. Yes, even before the Fall, perfection does not mean omniscience. Now, the Christ child is true God, and thus omniscient from before conception and birth. But, in the mystery of the two natures, the Christ is also true Man – *perfect* Man (this ‘second Adam’), but still true Man to be instructed and taught. So, if the

perfect child, Jesus, grows in wisdom and knowledge of the Lord, are you too proud to admit your need for the same? Do you convince yourself that you can be *self*-taught? That you know the Scriptures aright without aid or help? But, how did the Ethiopian say it when asked if he understood what he was reading? – “How *can* I, unless someone explains it to me?”

So, in Baptism, when God gives you the new birth and attaches to Old rotten Adam a *new* Adam, filled with Christ and His righteousness, such does not mean new Adam is beyond learning, any more than the first Adam or second Adam were beyond learning. New Adam is not omniscient in wielding Law and Gospel in daily life, in always having the *perfect* answer for marriage and family, in always showing his wisdom before his fellow Christian, in perfectly confessing before men. That’s not the mindset of New Adam; that’s the mindset of arrogant Old Adam! No, the child of God is to *grow* in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord.

But, let’s be honest, such exhortation for us to grow as a child, as Christ before us was not ashamed to do, is a mere application of that bookend of this text, when it is not the main purpose of the bookend of this text. The main purpose of that bookend is to show *Jesus’* humanity, that he – as a true child – learned and grew in knowledge and wisdom... as a *child* (the reference to him by the first bookend) *and* as a young man (as the

second bookend refers to him by name and points us beyond his first twelve years of life to his next eighteen years of life).

And the reason that is the main purpose of that bookend on Jesus' adolescence is *because* the rest of the text is about Jesus' divinity. The rest of the text teaches us that Jesus – in his omniscience as true God – already knew himself to be God, knew His work and mission as the Christ, and thus knew the importance of returning to His temple.

Jesus in the temple is what God naturally is all about; it's where God can be found! (In fact, in Luke's gospel, the first scene is Zechariah in the temple, the baby Jesus is brought to the temple, the man Jesus comes to the temple at Holy Week, the ascended Jesus is glorified by his disciples in the temple (the very last scene of the account). Luke's gospel highlights that the dwelling place of God and man that *had* been the temple is now to be the Christ: "Immanuel – God with us"... and, if it is, then all attention must move from the temple of stone to the temple of His body.

Thus, just as the Old Testament temple was always the place where the business of God was continually ongoing (so that the altar of sacrifice was ever-burning, day and night), so even the boy Jesus knows He is to be ever about His Father's business. Not even the Old Temple could match or supersede the Christ's dedication to God's dwelling with man.

What a comfort that should be to us, especially if we know our Biblical history. Recall, from the vision of Ezekiel 10, the Lord had *left* His temple because of the stubborn faithlessness and impenitence of His people; and, no matter how many years that old temple stood, it stood as a hollow reminder that God was *not* Immanuel. But now, in this Christ, whether a babe in a manger or a boy growing in wisdom and favor, now God was again “with us” ... precisely because this Jesus already at the age of 12 knows His mission to be God for us.

Would Christ leave any doubt that his comment in adolescence – “Did you not know I must be in my Father’s house (about my Father’s business)?” – did Christ leave any doubt that such a comment was more than merely a pious desire to be in church. No, He would later confess regarding himself: “Something greater than the temple is here!” And, in the very next breath, he would outshine our Old Testament reading by proclaiming, “Something greater than Solomon is here!” And again, to leave no doubt among us, or even among those who hated him and wanted to silence Him, He would prophesy of His own body, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.”

And by doing so, He in all of his divinity and in all of His humanity – this God-Man – would point all eyes and hearts to His cross and passion and completed Messianic mission, where the God-Man *for* us would secure redemption and thereby forever-ever

guarantee “God with us.” And, that God-with-us guarantee means a clear conscience for the soul and forever-after benefits for the resurrected body.

A few months ago, I was asked to compress this good news of this precise Gospel text into a five-minute audio recording for KFUO, our church body’s radio station. I was happy to do so, for the sake of the show’s listeners; but – let’s be honest – no radio meditation can substitute for the incarnate truth of “God with us” in the Divine Service, for an audio presentation can only help you to *think on* Jesus and His body ‘the temple.’ But here, He proves Himself “God with us” by sustaining your body as a temple of His Spirit by giving to your body *His* body, *His temple*... filled with the merits of His sacrifice and stained with His own blood as the Lamb... and, in that meal of His altar, He continues to be where you know He may be found being about His Father’s work of sustaining you unto that eternal inheritance of us with God and God with us.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

Rev. Mark C. Bestul
Calvary Lutheran Church
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