

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Grant Park, Illinois
The First Sunday after Christmas, December 30, 2018
Luke 2:41-52

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. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. 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. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 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."

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

The boy Jesus in the temple is one of the most uniquely human stories we have about Jesus and which I believe makes it one of the more comforting stories we have about him. Where does my suggestion come from? Well, let's look at some other parts of his life. First, think about his birth. God had Jesus' birth mapped out in the Bible. He says Jesus will be born of a virgin. He will be born in Bethlehem because he comes from David's line. It also said he would go to Egypt.

Now, fast forward into Jesus' adulthood. The Bible has plenty to say about that. Jesus would perform miraculous signs and wonders. He would be a powerful teacher. His death on a cross and his resurrection were clearly mapped out too. Jesus' early life, his ministry and his work of salvation are all hinted at in the Bible (where some hints are more direct than others). However, what portion of Jesus' life isn't really hinted at in the Bible? His youth, adolescence and transition into adulthood.

The Old Testament is silent about what this portion of Jesus' life would look like and the New Testament is silent about this portion of Jesus' life except for this lesson. The uniqueness leads to an interesting question: why would God want this story included in the Bible? We'll discover this morning it is because this story shows us Jesus' love for all people. It shows us his love for children and it also shows us his love for parents (and other adults) too.

We'll first look at Jesus' love for children. **"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. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends."**

Jesus' parents were devout Jews. In his Old Testament law, God said every Israelite man was supposed to appear before him at the temple three times a year. One of the required times was at the Passover. Women weren't commanded to go with, but Mary made it a point to go with Joseph to the feast. Little boys didn't go to the feast until they turned 12 years old. This story takes place after Jesus turns 12 and is attending his first Passover.

Jesus goes along with his parents, but when they leave he doesn't go with them. He ends up staying behind in Jerusalem. We'll deal more with Mary, Joseph and the adult end of things later, but for now we'll look more at the kid end of things by focusing our attention on the boy Jesus. Not everyone who is here today is, or ever will be, a parent, but each one of us is someone's child and most likely will go through the transition from being a young child into an adult.

Those years when children move from childhood into adulthood can be rather turbulent and troublesome. It is a time where kids push boundaries and try to discover their independence. It is an age where you rebel against authority and can get caught in some pretty obvious and public sins since you get caught up living for the moment rather than thinking about the lasting consequences. It can also be an age where you feel like your slipping all the time and you're all alone.

Every adult has been there and some of you are going through it right now or will be going through this stage very shortly. How does the story of the boy Jesus in the temple apply to you? **"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. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”

“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.’ ‘Why were you searching for me?’ he asked. ‘Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?’ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.”

Our story shows us Jesus is the victim of his own parents’ negligence. His parents didn’t take the time to look for him and make sure he was along with them. After his parents find him, what is their reaction? Mary is mad at Jesus and expresses her frustration with Jesus because she was worried and upset. Had Jesus done anything wrong? No, he hadn’t and he knew he had done nothing wrong. Adolescence is a time when kids really begin to develop the ability to reason.

An adolescent would be able to use this reason to quickly pick up on the fact that it wasn’t their fault they were lost. It was their parents’ fault and an adolescent wouldn’t always express this fact in the nicest or kindest way to their parents. They can be quick to pop off about it or drive the guilt dagger in to hurt their parents because they were treated unfairly. They respond to the sin of their parents with sins of their own.

How does Jesus respond? **“Why were you searching for me?’ he asked. ‘Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?’ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.”** Jesus points out to his parents he hadn’t sinned. He was following God’s call to be the savior of the world. Jesus’ time in the temple was God’s dramatic introduction to the religious leaders that his messiah had been born and they should be looking for him.

Yet, how did Jesus respond to Mary’s question? He went with his parents and was obedient to them. How then does this story apply to us? It is a comfort to children who actually do sin against their parents. Whether they deliberately disobey them, treat their parents cruelly when their parents sin against them or take their parents’ love for granted. Jesus’ active obedience to his earthly parents covers over all the sins which children commit against their parents.

Jesus perfectly listened to and obeyed his parents for every time you and I didn’t listen to and obey our parents. Jesus served his parents with love and respect to win forgiveness for you and me for all the times we disrespected our parents or treated them cruelly. Jesus willingly and gladly did these things for you and me because he loves us and the very human story of the boy Jesus in the temple shows us Jesus’ love for children and young people.

It also shows us Jesus’ love for parents and other adults. **“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. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind**

in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.”

Mary and Joseph took off after the festival, but they neglected to do one very important thing. They didn't make sure Jesus was with them. Was Jesus old enough to know they were going? Yes. Did he know his parents were leaving? Most likely. Was it his fault they didn't make sure he was along? No. It was not his responsibility to make sure he was along with the family. It was Mary and Joseph's responsibility to make sure he was along.

I've heard it said you never realize just how sinful you are until you are a parent. There is a lot of truth in that statement. Young children push you to be selfless and to put them first in most everything you do because they're literally helpless without their parents. It is often exhausting and the exhaustion often leads to sin. It leads to parents who get angry and yell at their children rather than dealing gently with them. It leads parents to blame children for the times they are negligent or forgetful.

These are all sins which parents wrestle with (and honestly any adult who spends time with a child will wrestle with them too). How does the boy Jesus in the temple apply to parents and adults? Look at the way Jesus deals with his parents in our story. **“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. ‘Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?’ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.”**

Jesus was the perfect child who was being raised by imperfect parents. He hadn't done anything wrong and they blamed him for their own sins. How did he respond? He responded to them with love and respect. He reminded them he was their savior too, but he willingly showed them love by obeying them and listening to what they had to say to him. It is a comfort to parents (and other adults) that Jesus loves them the same way he loved his own parents.

Jesus loved his parents with a perfect love to cover over their sins against him. He perfectly respected and obeyed them to heal the hurt which disobedient children inflict on their parents. He followed his father's will which led him to the cross to pay for the sins of both children and parents. Jesus' active obedience in this uniquely human story is such a comfort to those who are burdened by guilt and pain because it shows Jesus loves all people no matter their age. Amen.