

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday After Epiphany, January 15, 2023**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 342, 129:1, 133, 356, 38:4.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 16:1-17, Philippians 2:1-11, Luke 2:39-40.

Sermon Text: Luke 2: 41-52.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Every Jewish man was expected to attend three main festivals in Jerusalem according to the Law God had given through Moses. Moses told the people: ***“Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles,”*** Deuteronomy 16:16 (NIV). The Feast of Unleavened Bread, also called the Passover, was celebrated in memory of the time in Egypt when the Israelites were slaves and the Lord delivered them. In Egypt they followed the instructions of the Lord and put the blood of a sacrificed lamb on the sides and top of the doorframe of their houses. When every firstborn of both men and animals was struck dead in Egypt, the Israelites were spared. The Lord passed over their houses when he saw the blood of the lamb on the door frames.

After having been instructed in the Scriptures the Jewish boy at the age of 12 became a ‘son of the Law’. Jesus was now required to attend the three festivals we mentioned earlier. As the holy Son of God he needed to obey his heavenly Father. When the boy Jesus was twelve years old, Mary and Joseph took him to Jerusalem for the Passover. But something happened which his parents didn’t expect. We find that

**JESUS IS ‘LOST’ IN JERUSALEM**

- 1. Jesus is found with the teachers of the Bible.**
- 2. He is at the temple because he must be about his Father’s business.**
- 3. When Mary and Joseph find him, he obediently returns home with them.**

This family traveled from Nazareth in Galilee to Jerusalem in a group of relatives and friends and then returned home with the same group of people. But Jesus stayed in Jerusalem when they headed for home. ***“Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.”*** His parents didn’t know where he was. Was he guilty of the sin of disobedience? Certainly not, for this is the sinless Son of God we are talking about.

Imagine your family in such a situation. It’s easy to assume that a child might be with others in such a group of family and friends, and you wouldn’t worry. Of course, today, we would take great cautions about potentially leaving a child alone in a large city.

They became concerned and feared their 12 year old son was lost in the large city. So Mary and Joseph went back to Jerusalem and ***“After three days they found him.”*** We can only imagine where they might have looked. And where did they find him? He was not playing with children but ***“in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”***

We aren’t told where they were looking, but Jerusalem was estimated by historians to have a population between 10,00 and 40,000 at the time Jesus lived on earth. Even the temple courts are a large area, the equivalent of about 8 football fields. There would have been many people there, praying, singing, preparing to offer sacrifices and doing all the things Jews did in their worship. So even in such a large area, they would have had a difficult time finding him.

He was sitting in the midst of the learned teachers. He was there outwardly in the role of a pupil, but in reality he almost assumed the role of a teacher. He was listening to the learned teachers of the Law, but he was also asking searching questions, to the amazement of all those that were present. ***“Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”*** They had no idea that this boy was the Messiah. ***“When his parents saw him, they were astonished.”***

Now remember that at this time in Jewish history, parents took seriously their responsibility to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They taught their children the Word of God and gave them opportunities to learn about God from the Old Testament and their religious teachers.

But this is unusual. Here is a 12-year old ***“sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”*** Jesus wasn't with other 12-year old boys. He was with teachers of the Law, teachers of the Bible, leaders of the Jewish people; who were responsible for teaching them about their God.

And Scripture tells us ***“Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”*** In Jesus' actions here, we can see a Messianic fulfillment of these words from Psalm 119: ***“I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.”*** (Psalm 119:99-100 NIV)

We, of course, have the whole picture from all the Scriptures. We know the whole story. We know who this 12-year old boy was. We knew where he had come from. He was the very Son of God, omniscient and omnipotent, and he was the one who should have been teaching these humans.

But he was not usurping their authority. There is no clue that he was disrespectful in anything he was saying. He knew that children were to be respectful and honor their superiors, people older than them, people who had authority. He was, after all, the sinless Son of God as well as a true human.

A time would come when he would speak out against the leaders and the teachers of the Jews, the rabbis, the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees and condemn their sins. But this was not one of those times. Yet you can be certain that he was accurately speaking the will of God to them, to all who would listen with their hearts as well as their ears.

But at this time he was obviously respectful, ***“listening to them and asking them questions.”*** He was, after all, only 12 years old and Scripture is very clear that children are to obey those whom God has placed over them. In any answers he was giving to them in their discussions, Scripture says that ***“Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”***

When ***“His mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you’”*** we might seem surprised at his answer. ***“‘Why were you searching for me?’ he asked. ‘Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?’”*** He literally asks ‘didn't you know that it was necessary that I be about the things, the business of my father?’

When Jesus speaks of God as his heavenly Father, we know that he is revealing himself as the true Son of God. Throughout the four Gospels Jesus always speaks of God as “My Father,” the one who sent him to this earth to redeem sinners. When the Pharisees later in his life challenged Jesus saying that his testimony was not valid, Jesus replied: ***“I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me”*** John 8:18 (NIV). When the Jews said he was demon-possessed, Jesus said: ***“I am not possessed by a demon ... but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.” ... “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.”*** John 8:49,54 (NIV). When Jesus cleansed the temple which had been turned into a market place, we are told: ***“To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!’”*** John 2:16 (NIV).

We must emphasize that Jesus is the very Son of God because a majority of people in the world do not accept Jesus as the Son of God. They may think of him as a good man or a great prophet if they think of him at all. Muslims, for example, who are so much in the news today, consider Jesus simply as a prophet.

All such people reject the Gospel which teaches Jesus is the Son of God who died for the sins of the world. We should strengthen ourselves with the truth of Scripture which teaches that Jesus is God's only begotten Son. Jesus said: ***“The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him,”*** John 5:22-23 (NIV). Peter testified and said to Jesus: ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,”*** Matthew 16:16

(NIV). The Apostle John writes: ***“Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God,”*** 1 John 5:5 (NIV). In the same chapter John writes: ***“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true - even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life,”*** 1 John 5:20 (NIV). If we do not hold to this truth, we have no hope of salvation and eternal life, for the Bible says: ***“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life,”*** 1 John 5:11-12 (NIV).

His answer to his mother was not in the least disrespectful, as we might guess from some English translations. When we examine his answer and remember who he is, it all makes sense. Even at this age he had to be doing his heavenly Father’s business. There is no disrespect or disobedience in his answer. He was not rebelling against his parents. His complete obedience is shown in the words ***“And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.”*** He was already being about his heavenly Father’s business. He was obedient for us, so that God could impute his perfection to us and justify us.

In what Jesus was doing at the temple courts, we find an example for all of us. Are we about our Father’s business as we go about our own business here on earth? Are we concerned about what our heavenly Father wants in all we do? Scripture tells us ***“whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”*** 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) Let all our doings and life please and praise God, as we pray in Martin Luther’s daily prayers.

This applies to us not only as adults, but we must ask ‘how are we teaching our children to be about their heavenly father’s business both in what we say to them and in the examples we set for them?’ There is no age when one must start being a witness. Christ says to all of his disciples ***“you will be my witnesses.”*** Acts 1:8 (NIV) But sometimes we don’t think about how we can teach our children and others that message. Do we ignore or overlook opportunities to teach, and to reach out and tell about our faith?

But Scripture tells us that his parents ***“did not understand what he was saying to them.”*** When we don’t understand Scripture is the time to dig deeper into the Word of God.

***“Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.”*** In his obedience to his parents, we see also what has been called Jesus’ ‘active obedience’. He was quick to obey his parents according to the Fourth Commandment. God’s Son humbled himself by being subject to his parents. He did this for us. By being subject to the Law and obedient to his parents, Jesus atoned for all the sins that we have committed also against the Fourth Commandment. He perfectly fulfilled the Law which we have broken endless times by not honoring, serving, and obeying our parents. Jesus ***“humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross.”*** Philippians 2:8 (NIV)

Finally our text tells us: ***“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”*** He continues to grow in wisdom, the second time we read that in this chapter. He grew in the favor, in the good will of both God and men.

Jesus also grew physically, developing a strong and healthy body, preparing him for the hard labors of his public ministry later on. He may have grown into a strong, impressive, commanding figure. After all, he would have worked with Joseph as a carpenter before his public ministry began. When the people heard him teach later in his ministry they were amazed and ***“asked. ‘What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn’t this the carpenter?’”*** Mark 6:2-3 (NIV)

Even as a twelve-year old, Jesus was about his Father’s business, obeying him and teaching his will. Thanks be to God that his entire life was lived as our Savior! Amen.