

Sunday after Christmas C

December 30, 2018

Hymns: 54 - 707 CWS - 501 - 64

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord! Amen!

LUKE 2:41-52

OPEN YOUR ARMS TO RECEIVE THIS GOD AND MAN – YOUR SAVIOR!

Dear Brothers and Sisters of one young Jesus of Nazareth

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One night a pastor received a phone call that two of the little boys from his church were missing. The boys' family lived across the street from the church. It was already pitch dark. Mom and Dad were in a panic. They searched everywhere and couldn't find the boys. Rev. Brown opened the door to the church and was going to use the phone in his office to call for more help. As he passed through the darkened sanctuary, he heard somebody say, "Ssshhhhhhhh," and he looked down front and he could see the outline of two little heads. Those little boys were sitting down front in that darkened church. As Rev. Brown approached them, he asked, "What are you doing here?" "We were waiting for the Holy Ghost," one of them said. The little guys had been studying the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit, in Sunday School, Brown explains, and there they were in God's house waiting for that very same Holy Ghost to appear. Obviously that is one Sunday School lesson these boys had taken to heart!

It is Luke who tells us of the time when the boy Jesus went missing. His parents, Mary and Joseph, had made their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. Mary and Joseph were devoted to their Jewish faith. Adult Jewish males who lived within twenty miles of Jerusalem were required to attend Passover annually, but males living farther away might make the pilgrimage once in a lifetime. Women were not required to make the pilgrimage at all, which says something about Mary's devotion. The journey from Nazareth was 80+ miles and

would have taken considerable travel time.

This first Sunday after Christmas, the account before us underscores how very human God taking on humanity really was! This story underscores how truly Jesus was at one and the same time God and our brother! **Open Your Arms To Receive This God and Man – Your Savior!**

You know the story well. Jesus is twelve. His parents take Him on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. As they are returning home, they discover Jesus is missing. Now, before we continue our story, we need to remember the significance of His being twelve. In Jewish culture, He is on the verge of being a man. When a Jewish boy reaches the age of 13, he is declared to be a man and a "Son of the Covenant" or a "Son of the Law." A Bar Mitzvah is held as a celebration of this significant step in his life. After the Bar Mitzvah he is expected to 1) keep the Law, 2) learn a trade, and 3) attend a great Jewish feast. Jesus was nearly of that age.

To be twelve was to be on the verge of manhood. In that time and in that culture a twelve-year-old boy was expected to shoulder more responsibilities than we might expect out of a boy of that age today. To put matters into perspective, a girl Jesus' age might already have been spoken for by a man for marriage at some future age. In many ways it was a very different world. Still, it is shocking that it took almost a day for them to miss Him. Part of this was due to the nature of Mary and Joseph's excursion. For mutual safety they were traveling in a large group, among which were many family members and friends.

Thinking Jesus was probably playing with His friends somewhere in the midst of this large company of pilgrims, Mary and Joseph traveled for a day. Then they began looking for Him. It was then they discovered, much to their dismay, that Jesus was not with them. When they failed to find Him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for Him. After three days they found Him in the temple courts. Three days! That number may be significant. It is

certainly a long time to have your child missing. When they found their son, He was sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Luke tells us everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and His answers.

The perfectly moral Jesus had always been a studious little guy. On His mother's knee he had heard the stories of angels, and shepherds, and wisemen. He knew about His special life. But having emptied Himself of the use of His divine knowledge, young Jesus didn't know everything – not now, when the Holy Spirit had not yet descended upon Him at His Baptism. Even thereafter, Jesus denied Himself use of some of His divine knowledge, that He could honestly say He didn't know when the end of the world would come. He was leaving that knowledge to His heavenly Father during the years of His ministry. And so, the mystery of this God-man Jesus takes another turn beyond our comprehension!

Jesus at age twelve just didn't know how all this Messiah stuff was going to play out. Thus He was in His Father's house seeking answers to questions we can understand Him pursuing as an inquisitive twelve year old. When His parents found Him, they were astonished, but their astonishment was tempered by their exasperation. Mary 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?" Then Luke adds these interesting words: "But they did not understand what He was saying to them" – any more than sometimes we wonder why our adolescent children didn't understand our concerns for them! And, is there anyone in this room who has not felt at some time in your life that your parents did not understand you? Of course, there isn't one of us who could raise his or her hand to that. All of us have had times when we felt like our families didn't understand us. Conflict within families, particularly between the generations, is as old as time.

It's not easy being someone's son or daughter or being a parent--at any age! A teenager who had just received her learner's permit offered to drive her parents to church. After a hair-raising ride, they finally reached their destination. When the mother got out of the car she said emphatically, "Thank you!" "Anytime," her daughter replied with a smile. As her mother headed for the church door, she said, "I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to God."

It's not easy being a parent, particularly of a pre-teen or teenager. One woman said, "Doctor, I'd like you to evaluate my 13 year-old son." "OK," said the doctor, **"He's suffering from a transient psychosis with an intermittent rage disorder, punctuated by episodic radical mood swings, but his prognosis is good for full recovery."** The woman was surprised. "How can you say all that without even meeting him?" she asked. The doctor said, "I thought you said he's 13?"

Well, Jesus was twelve! And it wasn't easy being His parent! How does that strike you!? Even though He was the sinless Son of God, His very human nature was constructed so that He was going through the same radical hormonal and physical changes as other boys entering puberty. Boys and girls start distancing themselves from their parents and they begin establishing their own identity. Could we expect anything different from the fully human Jesus?! Young children behave like dogs. That is, they're affectionate and love being around you. But when they hit the teen years, they start acting like cats--distant and finicky. They make you feel unneeded. That goes with the territory for many teens. Nothing could be more normal. Don't panic when it happens in your family. There are times when all of us feel like our family does not understand us.

Poor Mary and Joseph! They had it all the more difficult trying to understand this special child they were raising in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! This part of raising Jesus would not be spared them! And on top of everything else, Jesus was developing a real sense of and

deeper relationship with His heavenly Father – just as we would hope our young people would as their heavenly Father speaks to them through His Word in Sunday School, worship, home devotions, and catechetical preparation for confirmation! In our text, Jesus is at the temple learning just those very things about His heavenly Father that you learned about Him and about the “Our Father” of the Lord’s Prayer you studied in one of Luther’s Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism!

Remember, even when He was an adult, Jesus’ family did not understand Him. Once, when He was at least 30 years of age, Mary, His mother, and His brothers came to Him and pleaded with Him to leave His ministry and come home. They were concerned about Him and felt that perhaps He was going off the deep end (Mark 3:20-34). Anybody in your family ever think you were getting a little too far out there? It happens. If it could happen to Jesus, the only perfect human Who ever lived, it could happen to anyone. People worry about their children, regardless of their age. As time passes, children worry about their parents, particularly aging parents. That’s part of life together in families. Jesus’ family finally did come around, of course. Acts 1:14 indicates they were a vital part of the Church after Christ’s resurrection, but there was a time when they didn’t understand Him at all.

Jesus’ family didn’t always understand Him, but they were always committed to Him and He knew it.

That’s what was important. Parents and young people need one another. Young people particularly need to know that their parents are committed to them and that nothing will ever break that commitment. A tired mom opened the front door of her home to find a young minister from the neighborhood. The pastor said, “I’m collecting donations for the new children’s home we’re building. I hope you’ll give what you can.” “To be sure,” said the beleaguered woman, “I’ll give you two boys, two girls, OR one of each.” Some of you know how that tired mom felt. You also know she was just kidding. There is nothing she would take in exchange for her children. Children may bring all kinds of headaches and heartaches, particularly during adolescent

years, but they need to know that your love is a constant in their lives. They need to know they will never cease being your son or daughter.

One day all too soon the widowed Mary would stand at the foot of a cross. The question, WHY!?, would scream through her mind. "Why me? Why my Son? Why?" Why? It was because of the love of God for lost sinners like you and me. Jesus came to work forgiveness for all the times you and I lost it in not understanding our child. He died for all the sins of disrespect and disobedience we committed against our parents and others who had authority over us. In these past days of Christmas many of you had opportunity to show, to tell your parents, your children about the love in your heart for them. It hurts when they are gone – gone from this world, or gone far away except at times such as Christmas. And they aren't always there to tell and show them how much you love them.

As the years came and went, Jesus' relationship grew and blossomed with His Father. According to His divine nature, the eternal Christ loved us right along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. According to His human nature, He didn't always understand and wished and longed for things to be different. Such was the case in the mystery scene at the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed if there be some other way – "Please, Father! Yet not My will, but Yours be done!" In a similar vein earlier, Jesus was torn between being with His parents back up in Nazareth and the pull to grow closer to His heavenly Father at the temple in Jerusalem.

Cooler heads and wiser heads prevailed at that temple some 2,000 years ago! We can tell that by how the story ends. "Why were you searching for Me?" Jesus 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, says Luke's Gospel, "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 man." Jesus knew

He was loved and that Mary and Joseph were committed to Him.

Jesus loved them...and Jesus loves you! Jesus would one day die for them....Jesus died for you. You may not always understand what happens in your life. But know that God in Christ loves you! Love your family members and all your brothers and sisters in this life as you love yourself! And, child of God, even if your mind isn't always clear where your heavenly Father and elder brother Jesus are leading - open your arms and open your hearts in love to the wonderful God-man Jesus, your Savior! Amen!

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, Who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word! Amen!