

# Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

## Des Moines, WA

### December 30, 2012

Luke 2:41-52

#### Lessons from the Boy Jesus

1. **Background to his Temple visit**
2. **A lesson in active obedience**
3. **A lesson in passive obedience**

Hymns: : 35 – 707 – Distribution: “*Gathered Round Your Table,*” 56, 58 - Closing: 415

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

**Luke 2:41-52 –**

<sup>41</sup> Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. <sup>43</sup> After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. <sup>44</sup> Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup> When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup> 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.”

<sup>49</sup> “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” <sup>50</sup> But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>51</sup> Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup> And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

We’ve had the “what.” Now we need to learn “how” and “why!”

What does that mean? Christmas certainly does focus on the “what,” meaning what exactly happened on the first Christmas in Scripture. What did happen?

- Luke 1 – The angel to Mary: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*”
- Matthew 1 – The account of Joseph: “*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel*”—which means, “God with us.”

What happened at Christmas? Nothing less than the Incarnation. God the Son took on human flesh and humanity. Christ the Lord was born, true God and true man!

Why? Couldn’t God have saved mankind without having to take on humanity? Did the Son have to become true man, which will now be attached to him for all eternity? Why such drastic measures?

Today, we will find out. We will discover this in the only account we have in Scripture from Jesus’ boyhood, a visit to the Temple in Luke 2. As we focus on this account today, pay special attention to the clues and emphases on Jesus being GOD and MAN. And we pray that God would lead us to faith in why Jesus had to be both!

## 1. Background to his Temple visit

First, let’s review some of the basics of this account from Luke 2. As we said, this is the only account in the Bible of Jesus’ boyhood. We could call the time between Jesus’ infancy and the beginning of his ministry at age 30 as “the silent years.” There is a large gap that is unfilled.

People today enjoy visiting birthplaces and hometowns of famous people. Have you seen some? Perhaps the birthplace of a president or politician? Or a musical genius? Or a sports

figure? Or a local hero? You can't do that in the case of Jesus. No stable to visit. No house in Nazareth to see. We do know Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth and settled the little family there, far from the influence of wicked King Herod (Archelaus) in Judea.

We do find out that Joseph led his family in an important spiritual exercise, namely attending the Passover every year in Jerusalem. You might recall that the OT commanded every Israelite male to come to Jerusalem three times a year for high feasts: The Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Feast of Weeks at the time of Pentecost. Joseph – and Mary too, incidentally – attended the Passover in Jerusalem faithfully. This shows the type of home Jesus that grew up in. Sadly, there were many who did not bother to attend. Many did not bother with Sabbath regulations either. Mary and Joseph had not been like this, but had had Jesus circumcised on Day 8, had presented him in the Temple with the required offering after 40 days, and now attended the Passover faithfully. Their home was centered on the importance of God's Word and his OT commands!

This particular year, Jesus was 12 years old. This is noteworthy. This is the approximate age when a boy would become a "son of the command," or in Hebrew, "bar-mitzvah." A rough comparison would be to our Confirmation process. A young Jewish boy would formally become a man before the Law and would be responsible for his own life and conduct before God and his fellow man. This age and relationship to the Temple religion makes this noteworthy today.

After Jesus and his parents celebrated the Passover, we heard that Mary and Joseph left town and went a day's journey before they realized that Jesus was not with them. They lost him! It is at this point that we might have some serious questions: How can parents "lose" a child like this? And when you have been entrusted with the Messiah, the Son of God, how especially could this happen?!

To understand this, we really have to understand the culture of the times. In going to

such a festival, often a whole village would travel together. Or even a group of small villages. Many were related to each other in such a group, and a young man wouldn't necessarily be required to walk with his parents and report for check-in regularly. Perhaps a loose comparison might be if you had an event such as a large family reunion at a park all day, or the church campout we have with many families during Memorial Day weekend. The kids can be playing and adults conversing, and there's not much concern about "checking in." I think this also points to some evidence that Jesus had attended this festival regularly, and now at age 12 there was not much concern for his responsibility in keeping with the group.

Yet now he was lost. Can you imagine the frantic worry of Mary and Joseph as they searched for him, most likely in the ditches along the way back to Jerusalem and then retracing their steps in the big city? Later, when Mary confronts Jesus she said, "*Son (literally, 'child'), why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.*" Literally, it says they have been searching for him "ODINAW" – in mental and physical pain! In agony, torment, and sorrow that implies physical pain as well.

Perhaps some parents here can relate. Have you ever lost a child at the mall? Or at the theme park? Or found the front door open and your toddler nowhere in sight? Have you ever had to call a neighbor, security, or the police to report a missing child? Do you remember your fear and worry as you did? Mary and Joseph were in mental and physical pain and anguish as they searched!

They finally found him after three days – In the Temple, of all places. They came upon a scene which Scripture describes as amazing and astounding. He was in conversation with the Seminary professors there. He was asking unbelievable questions and giving insights into theological discussion! And they were amazed! It says that the teachers at the Temple were literally "beside themselves," an expression we still use today. Flabbergasted. At a loss. Overwhelmed. It seemed surreal what was

happening in their discussions with this young man. And his parents? It says they were astonished, literally the word for being hit in the head and dazed. They were knocked out of their senses by what was being discussed there. You probably have seen child prodigies on TV or YouTube. Musical geniuses or intellectual wizards. And you probably have seen people's jaws drop in amazement.

The account closes with these words: "*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.*"

## 2. A lesson in active obedience

So what lessons do we learn from the boy Jesus? As we emphasized before, what lessons do we learn from the God-man? Simply put, we learn profound things about Jesus' active obedience and passive obedience as your Savior from this story.

Let's think first about Jesus active obedience first. Do you remember what that term means? God's command to people who want to enter his paradise in heaven is, "*Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.*" God demands a perfect life to be saved. Do you have a perfect life? If not, you need a Savior!

Why did Jesus have to be true man? He had to be placed under God's laws in order to keep those laws perfectly as your substitute. A familiar Christmas verse from Galatians 4 says, "*When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*"

We see the beginning of Jesus, the God-man, saving us by his active obedience in this account. How so? First, he is growing and learning as a human being. Think about his nature as true man: In a mysterious way, Jesus is maturing and growing up. He is entering the teen years. He is becoming an adult. **He is**

**living the perfect life as your substitute, and needed to be MAN to do that.**

We also see specifically how Jesus is keeping the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment perfectly for us. "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy," the commandment says. This commandment covers our attitude toward the hearing and learning of God's Word and our worship life. Jesus is doing this perfectly. As a MAN, he is attending the OT Passover, as all males were required to do. Normally, we might ask, "Couldn't God be excused from that?" **As true God, Jesus didn't need to approach God the Father at the Passover as a sinner, but he was living a perfect life in our place.**

Jesus also was exhibiting spiritual regard for God's Word in the discussion and questioning that was taking place in the Temple. As MAN, this is his active obedience for us. It's interesting that in the process we also see his divine nature as he amazes and astounds sinful mortals with his knowledge and understanding of the Word, even at age 12!

Therefore, today is a fitting day for you to examine yourselves as to your need for his obedience when it comes to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment. How has your personal obedience to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment been in your life?

- 12-year olds (or so) here today, have you always been eager to come to your "temple" to hear and learn from the Word of God?
- Adults, is your worship pattern regular? And does it weekly come with an attitude of eagerness and excitement, or more from a sense of obligation and duty?
- What about your spiritual growth in Bible class? Do you not attend any Bible classes our church offers for "no reason?" Is it a matter of you despising the Word?

**Praise God that the God-man under the law, Jesus Christ, has kept this commandment for you and gives you the chance to now follow him again!**

The other commandment we clearly see here is the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: “Honor your father and mother that it might go well with you and that you might enjoy long life on the earth.” Jesus clearly kept that commandment perfectly here as the God-man.

It’s a fitting time for you to review your obedience to the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment. If you’re out on your own now, looking back, how did you keep it? And if you’re still under your parents’ roof, how do you keep it?

- What about your personal honesty with your parents?
- What about the respect you gave (give) your mother? And your father?
- What about the obedience you submissively showed your mother? And your father?

**Praise God that the God-man under the law, Jesus Christ, has kept this commandment for you and gives you the chance to now follow him again! He did it so well that he grew in favor with God and people!**

### 3. A lesson in passive obedience

Our other lesson today has to do with another theological term related to active obedience, namely “passive obedience.” As GOD and MAN this is vital to our salvation! To define, Jesus’ passive obedience refers to the fact that we also need a Savior who will clean up the mess of our sin and pay for its guilt.

We see this less clearly in our reading, but it certainly is there. Jesus told his mother, “*Why were you searching for me? Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?*” Literally, that phrase says, “I had to be in the things of my Father.” Many English translations render this “in my Father’s house,” but I believe that the others which render this something like “about my Father’s business” catch the meaning more clearly. The Temple obviously would be included in that, but what was the Father’s business? And what was Jesus discussing with those teachers on that day?

What was the focus of the Word God spoke in the OT? Verses come to mind when Jesus taught his followers in other places in the NT:

- When he taught the two disciples after his resurrection on the way to Emmaus, he said, “*How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?*” *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*”
- To his own Twelve, he said in Luke 9: “*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*”

His “**Father’s business**” was going to include the sacrifice that he as the Messiah was going to make for the sin of the world. It was the showdown between good and evil, as Jesus would pay for the world’s sin and cry, “It is finished!” It was his mission to die as true man for all, which only could be accomplished by the costly life and blood of the Son of God who was true God. How strongly Jesus felt about this mission of his Father’s business, when he said he “must be” about it!

Suddenly this “Christmas stuff” has deep implications. The “what” of it we have celebrated: The Son of God – true God – has become true man and veiled himself in human flesh and blood. But today we begin to see the “how” and the “why” of it. The Christ must be GOD and MAN to win our salvation with his active and his passive obedience.

Finally, some may view it as a shame that we have so little information about Jesus boyhood and early life. But is that all bad? Might there be an unhealthy curiosity about the novelty of exactly how the Christ could grow up and become a grown man if we had more details? It certainly could be.

Scripture gives us the most important accounts that we need to know and believe for our salvation as the God-man serves as our

Savior. May we be led to thank and praise him today as we see hints at the beginning of his life of why he is God and man. And may God comfort us with this message not only at Christmas, but throughout our lives. Amen.