

Luke 2:41–52
1st Sun. after Epiphany
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
January 8, 2023

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

Jesus said to Mary and Joseph: *“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.*

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

Our Gospel text this morning is the only time we hear in Scripture about Jesus’s upbringing. Between His birth and infancy until His baptism by John the Baptist some 30 years later, this is the only account we have in the meantime: twelve year old Jesus in the Temple during the celebration of Passover. Here we see once again, early on, who Jesus is: the Son of God who took on our human flesh to lay down His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world and then to rise again from the dead on the third day. Here Jesus reveals Himself to the astonishment of all who heard Him, yet even those who were closest to Jesus didn’t quite understand these things, at least not yet.

Jesus grew up in a pious, god-fearing, and faithful Jewish family. His mother, Mary, was called favored and blessed. Joseph is called a just man. And we see in our Gospel text this morning that Mary and Joseph would go to Jerusalem every year for the Passover festival, as was their custom. Worshiping the Lord in His house, the Temple, was the most important thing in their lives. Jesus grew up in a home and within an extended family where faith was primary. He grew up among people where the things of God came first. And so at the age of 12, Jesus accompanied his earthly relatives to the Holy City to commemorate the Passover, the celebration of when the Lord brought His people, Israel, out of slavery in Egypt.

But when it was time to go home, Jesus remained where He belonged: in His Father's house, the Temple, and among His Father's things. Mary and Joseph should have known better. When the angel announced to Mary that she would conceive a son, he announced that the boy's name would be Jesus. The angel said: "He will be great and will be called the *Son of the Most High*. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His Father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Mary responded: "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the *Son of God*." Mary already knew that her son would also be the Son of God. And Joseph was told in a dream by an angel: "do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So both Mary and Joseph had already been told by angels who Jesus is: the Son of God, and what Jesus would do: save His people from their sins and establish an eternal kingdom.

But Mary and Joseph didn't quite understand yet. When they found Jesus in the Temple, Mary couldn't help expressing her anguish in losing her son: "your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." Jesus responds with what Mary and Joseph should have already known: "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. Who Jesus is and what He came to do had been clearly revealed, but even those who were closest to Jesus couldn't quite understand these things just yet.

It's the same story in Jesus's hometown of Nazareth, when He began His public ministry: Jesus was misunderstood by those who were closest to Him. At first the people spoke well of

Jesus. They marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth as He interpreted the Prophet Isaiah in light of Himself. But when Jesus preached that no prophet is acceptable in His hometown, His old family and friends and acquaintances were filled with wrath. They drove Jesus out of town and were ready to throw Him off a cliff! At first they marveled at Jesus's teaching. But still they didn't quite understand.

We see the same problem with Jesus's disciples. They were closer than anyone to Jesus, but still couldn't understand what was going on until after His death and resurrection. On three separate occasions in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells the disciples up front that He will be delivered into the hands of men. On his final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus told His disciples in the clearest possible terms that everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets would be accomplished. Jesus would be delivered over to the Gentiles, mocked, shamefully treated, and spit upon. The Son of Man would be flogged and killed, and on the third day He would rise again from the dead. The disciples, however, did not understand this. The meaning was hidden from them and they did not grasp it. Their eyes were only fully opened after everything had been fulfilled and they saw everything in light of Jesus' death and resurrection. That's what we see at the very end of Luke's Gospel. The risen Lord Jesus appears to His disciples and says: "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

Like those closest to Jesus, we, too, can have a hard time understanding and trusting Jesus' teachings about Himself and what He came to do. For example, we often forget a basic tenet of Christianity: that suffering comes before glory, that the life of a Christian is a life of bearing the cross. We can sometimes lose heart when we see the sin all around us and in us and

ask God why He doesn't do anything about it all. We know God's promises, and we forget those promises. But Jesus is patient with us and continues reminding us of the truth of God's Word by opening the Scriptures to us. The more time we spend among our Father's things, listening to our Lord's voice in His Word, the more everything we don't understand in Scripture, or in our lives, begins to make sense. We begin to see how everything relates to Jesus. Jesus teaches us and shows us in His life and death on the cross that misunderstanding, betrayal, suffering, and death will be part of our lives, just as they were part of His life. We will be hated by all because we bear the name of Jesus, but not a hair of our head will perish. We will suffer to the end, yet those who endure will receive the crown of life when the Son of Man comes again. Everything makes sense when Jesus opens the Scriptures to us.

Jesus had to be in His Father's house, among His Father's things, and about His Father's business. That's the way it is with us Christians as well. We come to God's house to search the Scriptures and receive eternal life in Jesus. But the natural man cannot perceive anything of the Spirit of God. It is foolishness to Him and He cannot discern it. And so we continue to pray that Jesus would open our understanding, give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and enlighten the eyes of our understanding that we might know the hope of our calling and what are the riches of Christ's glorious inheritance in the saints. We pray that we might bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, believing that all that was spoken in Scripture by the holy men of God was by the movement of the Holy Spirit, that we might increase in the knowledge of God and be strengthened with power according to His glorious might, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of Jesus unto the measure of the stature of His fullness. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen. We stand for the Offertory.