

Luke 2:41–52  
Epiphany I  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
January 7, 2024

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

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

During the Epiphany season, we concentrate on how our Lord Jesus Christ manifested His divine glory, proving that He is not only the Son of Man but also the Son of God. That's what the word "epiphany" means. It comes from the Greek word for "manifestation" or "revealing." During the Epiphany season, we see how the Christ child of Bethlehem, the son of Mary, Jesus Christ, is at the same time the God of the universe and Lord over all things. During the Epiphany season, the divine nature of Jesus becomes clear. Jesus reveals or manifests the truth of who He truly is as God. That's what we see in our Gospel text for this first Sunday after Epiphany with the boy Jesus in the Temple. He's a regular, 12 year old kid. But at the same time, His divine glory can't help but shine through. Besides the revelation of who Jesus is, we also have a picture this morning of what Jesus has come to do. His connection to the place of the Old Testament Temple and to the time of the Old Testament Passover reveals many things about why God became man.

As a pious Jewish family, the Holy Family, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of Passover. In the Law of Moses, God told the people: "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that He will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (i.e. the Passover), at the Feast of Weeks (i.e. Pentecost), and at the Feast of Booths" (Deut 16:16). The place God chose was the city of Jerusalem, specifically the Temple. When the Temple was finally dedicated during the reign of King Solomon, God said:

“Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time” (2 Chron 7:15–16). The Temple is the place where the divide between God and man is overcome. There, at the Temple, God accepts the sacrifices and the prayers of His people. There, at the Temple, the Word of God is proclaimed in its truth and purity. The location of today’s Gospel reading in the Temple is key.

Also key is the timing: during the Passover. The Passover was the annual commemoration of God’s leading of His people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised land. The last plague God brought against Israel’s Egyptian oppressors was the death of the firstborn son of every household. But God’s people had the promise of the slaughtered Passover lamb, eaten, and with its blood painted on the doorframe. The Angel of death would see the blood of the covenant and pass on, sparing those in the house. The Old Testament Passover is a divine picture of Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus gave His body to eat and His blood to drink during the Passover celebration. He was slaughtered upon the altar of the cross at twilight on the Passover, and His blood covers your sin. When God sees the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, He spares you from His coming wrath. Justice was carried out on Jesus so that the LORD could lead you out of slavery to sin and into the promised land of eternal life. The boy Jesus in the Temple on the Passover is a foreshadowing of that greatest of Passovers to come some twenty years later, a Passover we continue celebrating in the Lord’s Supper every Sunday and festival day.

When the Feast of Passover was ended, the Holy Family began on its journey home to Nazareth, accompanied by extended family and friends. But Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, in the Temple, without Mary and Joseph knowing about it. They thought they had lost Jesus, but

after three days, they found Him again. Those three days should remind you of something. After our LORD was placed into a tomb, everything seemed lost. The women went to the tomb and found the stone rolled away, but the body of Jesus wasn't there. The angels said to them: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered His words (Luke 24). It's no accident that Jesus was lost for three days and then found. This is one of those events Mary treasured up in her heart. That the LORD is lost for three days and then found in the Temple points to our Lord's going away for three days in death, only to be found again on the third day in the Temple of His Body, risen from the dead.

Twelve-year old Jesus was found in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. He was the most precocious of confirmation students, not saying too much, or acting too smart, but soaking up the wisdom of God's Word from His teachers. He was growing in His understanding of God's Word and in the prophecies that He Himself was fulfilling as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. The teachers were amazed at Jesus's understanding and answers, not knowing that Jesus Himself is the true teacher. He is the one who spoke by the prophets and gave the Law to Moses. The boy Jesus is the author of salvation and the fulfillment of God's promises. He is the light that scatters the darkness of spiritual ignorance and unbelief. The teachers are amazed at the clarity this boy, Jesus, brings to God's Word. And so Jesus, in His wisdom even as a young boy, proves Himself to be the Wisdom of God.

Mary and Joseph were also astonished at the wisdom proceeding from the mouth of their son, yet they still considered Him according to the flesh (2 Cor 5:16). That is, they still thought

of Jesus as their little boy. Mary and Joseph knew the promises about the Christchild, that He would be called great and the Son of the Most High, and that the Lord God would give to Him the throne of His Father David, that He would reign over the house of Jacob forever and that His Kingdom would be eternal. The angel revealed who this child was. But oh how quickly we forget. We functionally forget that the baby in Bethlehem, or the boy Jesus in the Temple, is God Himself in the flesh, come to earth to teach us and lead us out of our bondage to sin. We forget that in Jesus, God is with us every moment of every day. Nothing is mundane. Mary forgets for a moment that her son is the Son of God, so she says: “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” Mary scolds Jesus as if he were any other child.

Jesus responds: “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” This is the epiphany in today’s Gospel Lesson. Jesus manifested His wisdom before the teachers of the Law and before His parents, and now He states who He is and how this came to be with clear words. Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house? Mary and Joseph didn’t get it. They knew who Jesus is and why He came to earth. The angels announced it to them. They experienced His miraculous conception and birth. But they were so caught up in their mundane worries that they lost sight of reality. Jesus is the Son of God the Father. And as the Son of God the Father, He had to be in His Father’s house, the Temple, and about His Father’s things. He had to spend time in the Word with others, teaching and learning the truths of the Bible.

So often, we end up like Mary and Joseph. We have the promises of God’s Word about Jesus, but then the mundane cares of this life get in the way. We lose sight of Jesus in the hustle and bustle of our busy lives. The least important things become the most significant and what is

of greatest importance gets lost. Instead let us stop and reflect a bit, asking ourselves with Mary and Joseph: “Where’s Jesus?” “Where did He go?” “Where does He fit into my life?” Jesus becomes such a normal part of our lives that we end up neglecting Him or losing Him. Jesus is God in the flesh, come to earth to die for our sins and rise for our justification. He came to bring us to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. Where is Jesus in your life? Come to the Temple. Come to church and to God’s Word. Receive Jesus in the true Temple of His body and blood, given and shed for you. There you will find Jesus where He promises to be, among His Father’s things.

Jesus manifests His glory as a twelve-year old boy in the Temple to remind us that He is no ordinary twelve-year old boy. He’s so much more than just another kid, but He’s also not less than that. He’s like you in every way, just without sin (Heb 4:15). Jesus is ruler over all, the LORD suddenly come to His Temple (Malachi 3:1). But He’s also a boy who obeys His parents, who loves and submits to those God has put over Him in this life. As a regular child, Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature in favor with God and man. His education continued. He kept growing physically, mentally, and spiritually, until it was finally time for His public ministry to begin at His Baptism (Luke 1:80). In the meantime, Jesus reminds His parents and us that He is God in the flesh, the Son of God the Father, yet also Mary’s Son, who was born to lay down His life as the sacrificial lamb for us and for the whole world. Like Mary, we treasure up all these things in our hearts, always holding on to Jesus and never letting Him out of our sight. 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 Creed.