

First Sunday after Christmas – December 30, 2018

Luke 2:41-52

41 Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. 43 After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. 44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 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.” 49 “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them. 51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Wow, that was just amazing! There are a lot of products out there that are marketed as amazing, the best of their kind. Here are some local companies: Simply Amazing Blinds, Amazing Lash Studio, Amazing Carpet Cleaning, Amazing Balloon Entertainment, and Amazing EZ Screen Porch Windows. Now this is not to say that these companies might not have great products. And yet the word amazing may have lost some of its significance. By definition to amaze is to fill with wonder, to astound, to cause astonishment. And while that may be true for some products, rare is the thing that causes true wonder and astonishment. In our Gospel lesson from Luke 2 we have amazement and astonishment, although not directed at some cleverly marketed item. That amazement is directed towards the boy Jesus as he is at the temple. This morning we will consider **The Amazing Boy Jesus**. First because **he was fully human** and second because **he was fully obedient**.

This section which closes Luke chapter 2 is the only account we have of Jesus’ life from the time between when he was a baby and when he was baptized around age 30. He is the leading the normal life of a twelve year old Jewish boy. “Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom” (v. 41-42). Jews would make the annual pilgrimage up the hills to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, when the Israelites were delivered from Egypt.

But then Jesus did something not so normal for a twelve year old Jewish boy. “After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it” (v. 43). Jesus stayed behind in the temple, “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.” This was not the usual thing. “Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers” (v. 47). The boy Jesus was learning from these rabbis and they were amazed at his abilities—it caused wonder because they had probably never seen anything like him before. Here was the perfect learner, true God and true man, able to understand better than anyone his age, perhaps even better than them.

It is a miracle and a mystery, the incarnation of Jesus—God taking on human flesh. Jesus was the Son of God, but he was also fully human. To try and clearly explain how the infinite, almighty God could become a finite, limited man is impossible. And yet it happened. Jesus,

“who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Php 2:6-7). Jesus set aside the full use of his divine powers and attributes when he became man. How much exactly did Jesus at age twelve know? We don’t know for sure. He knew that he was to be about his heavenly Father’s business and yet we know from verse 52 that he was growing in wisdom and stature. The Son of God was fully human.

There can be two negative reactions when faced with this teaching of the two natures of Christ, the fact that he is true God and true man. On the one extreme, we may try too hard to understand it all and concern ourselves with nailing down all the details. How was a virgin able to conceive by the Holy Spirit? Was Jesus a helpless toddler? How much did he know at different ages in his life? Did he ever do any miracles to help his parents? When did Jesus know exactly that he had to suffer and die? How did he communicate with his Father? All this is pure speculation and the Bible does not offer answers. The other extreme is to think that it is not all that important. If I can’t understand it, I just won’t bother with it at all. If people think differently on the topic, it does not matter too much. As long as we have our basic faith, that will be enough.

But as with many things in our Lutheran teaching, we take a middle approach between those two extremes. We acknowledge that we cannot fully comprehend the mystery and know all the details of Jesus life. Yet it is still good to understand why the Son of God had to be fully human, because it is at the core of our faith. Jesus had to be man live under the law and to die on the cross, something only humans can do. But he had to be God to do both of those things perfectly—keeping the law and never sinning and also dying a death that could substitute for everyone of all time. The boy Jesus had to be fully human in order to save us. And so Jesus is truly amazing—God became man so that we as sinners might become saints.

As we consider the amazing boy Jesus, not only is he fully human, but he is also fully obedient. First of all he was obedient to his parents. Now you may be thinking, but how was Jesus obedient if he stayed behind in Jerusalem? We do not know the exact circumstances. We know Mary and Joseph left without making sure he was with them. They assumed he was traveling with friends or family. But we do know that Jesus was not disobeying his parents in this instance, because that would have been a sin and Jesus did not sin. Verse 51 says, “Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.” Jesus as a child was obedient to his parents. Think about that for a moment and how amazing it is—we have all been children—never disobeying our parents, never doing anything wrong. Jesus was living the perfect life we cannot. Think also about Jesus, being true God and having to obey imperfect, sinful parents. He was God, he did not need to take orders from any man or woman. And yet he did, for our sake. That is truly amazing.

Jesus was also obedient to his Father in heaven. Listen to Jesus’ response to Mary questions of why he had stayed behind: “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (v. 49), literally, the things of my Father, to be about my Father’s business. Jesus’ focus was not the usual path for a twelve year boy. It was not just playing games, exploring the outdoors, or hanging out with friends, which Jesus probably did. Even at this young age, his focus was on the work he came to do. As was mentioned before, this is the only account of Jesus from birth until age thirty. We do not know the details of his personal life. Some fictitious gospels have tried to fill in the gaps, but they are mere speculation. But the Bible reveals what we need to know and focuses most importantly on Christ’s work of salvation, God’s plan to save us from sin and death.

We may not know all the details of Jesus' life, but we certainly know the details of our own lives, and they are many. During Advent we thought about the busyness of our lives as we made our preparations for Christmas. But it's not just December that is busy, our whole lives the whole year are filled with details. From the extra work that you bring home from the job, to the sports and after school activities you may be involved in, to the chores around the house, to providing for a family, our lives have many details. And sometimes it is easy to lose God in the mix. Oh we may have time to make it to church once in a while, but every week? That's pushing it, some mornings we just need to sleep in. Bible study and Sunday school would be nice to attend, but again we don't really have the time, and we've heard most of it before. A family devotion at home? We don't eat any meals together, let alone have time to sit down for a devotion. Time for personal growth in God's Word? I'm already getting up early and going to bed late with things not getting done, that will have to wait.

Although taking care of those details is necessary, they should not crowd out what is most important in our lives. Worship and bible study are not just things to check off on our to-do list. They are not things we do to get the pastor off of our back. They are important for nurturing our faith and giving us the strength to deal with the problems and heartaches and details of this life. Already at age twelve, the amazing boy Jesus had his focus on the work he came to do because it was very important. When compared with all the details of our lives, the study of God's word is most important because it deals with our eternal future. If we let our faith be crowded out of our lives, it may make for a few more enjoyable moments on this earth, but we will miss out on the enjoyable moments of an eternity in heaven.

As we begin a New Year with all the resolutions that are being made, let us resolve to rededicate ourselves once again to putting the focus of our lives on Christ and the study of his Word and the worship and praise of his name. He truly is amazing. As a boy, he was fully human, so that he could save us human sinners from that eternity in hell. He also was fully obedient, both to his parents and to his heavenly Father, with his focus on the work set before him. As his mother Mary did more than once, let us treasure all these things in our hearts and thank God for the gift of his amazing Son! Amen.