

The Second Sunday after Christmas



And Jesus increased in wisdom and
in years, and in divine and human
favor.

HYMN

*O Love of God, how strong and true,
eternal yet ever new;
uncomprehended and unbought,
beyond all knowledge and all thought.*

*O wide-embracing, wondrous Love,
we read thee in the sky above;
we read thee in the earth below,
in seas that swell and streams that flow.*

*We read thee best in him whom came
to bear for us the cross of shame,
sent by the Father from on high,
our life to live, our death to die.*

*(Horatius Bonar 1808-1889)
(The Hymnal 1982 #455)*

Behold, the dwelling of God is with mankind. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God. *Revelation 21:3*



Lord, open our lips, and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Alleluia. To us a child is born: Come let us adore him. Alleluia.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth,

Lord God heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Psalm 84:1-8

Quam dilecta!

1 How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! *
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

2 The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.

3 Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.

4 Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.

5 Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

6 They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.

7 Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.

8 Behold our defender, O God; *
and look upon the face of your Anointed.

THE LESSON

Luke 2:41-52

The parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem every year for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him 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. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

REFLECTION

by

Norm Wright

+ Give us strength to set our hearts on the pilgrims' way. Amen +

Apart from the stories about Jesus' birth in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, there is nothing said about Jesus' growing up years, except this one story of a 12-year old Jesus going with Mary and Joseph to the Temple to celebrate the passover. The question that comes to mind is why Luke bothered to include it. Apart from it being a quaint story of a young adolescent boy staying behind in the Temple to talk to scholars and showing his parents some attitude, it doesn't seem to offer us anything that we don't already know about Jesus... or does it?

A little history that is not obvious to us in Luke's telling of this story might be helpful in understanding Luke's reason for placing it in his Gospel. The Jewish Talmud records a tradition that during the Second Temple period (the time in which this story took place) it was customary for families to take their first born sons to the Temple, particularly on the Feast of Passover, to do their first fast recalling the 10th plague of the Exodus story in which the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain. After such a fast, the firstborn son would be taken to the Temple to be blessed by the sages. [See Exodus 13].

This is most likely why Luke mentions Mary and Joseph taking Jesus to Jerusalem as a 12-year old. We can deduce from that encounter with such scholars, the inquisitive and bright boy that Jesus was had a lot of questions and was learning quite a bit from them. In fact, his claim at having to be in his Father's house likely proceeded from those conversations; hence, his rather smart aleck question addressed to Mary and Joseph, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Obviously Mary and Joseph did not know.

After losing track of Jesus a days journey away from Jerusalem, they came racing back to the still over-crowded Jerusalem and having to take three days to finally find him in the Temple conversing with these scholars, they likely would not have been in a mood to be questioned about what they did or did not know. One can only imagine the immense relief they had when they found him and the frustration they soon felt after finding Jesus calmly conversing with a group of scholars who were taken by this bright 12-year old's answers, but who also might have had it in mind to question Jesus where his parents were.

We get an understated sense of Mary's and Joseph's frustration with Jesus in Mary's question, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." As if to add fuel to the fire, Jesus had the effrontery to basically say, "Why did you bother coming to find me? You should have been able to figure it out where I'd be."

The simple fact is that Jesus knew all of that and didn't bother telling Mary and Joseph of his intent to stay behind, and then acted annoyed at being confronted. Like any headstrong 12-year old who was determined to have his own way, Jesus didn't want to risk the answer he likely knew would be "No." Luke saying that Mary and Joseph didn't understand what Jesus was saying is a mild way of saying they had enough of Jesus' sass. Perhaps the most revealing comment in this story is "Then he (Jesus) went down with them and came to Nazareth, **and was obedient to them.**"

Why Luke added this story may have been to illustrate that after all the hoopla of Jesus's birth as the Son of God, Jesus is truly one of us and what is true about us is true about Jesus also. Jesus had to go through all the "growing up" things we did. He made mistakes, and he sinned.

In this story we see Jesus committing both a sin of omission in not telling his parents what he was planning on doing and then committing the sin by following through with his plan. To top it all off, he tries to place the blame for Mary's and Joseph's anxiety on them for not having figured out what he was up to. While we might tend to overlook these obvious transgressions because we know Jesus is God's Son, the simple fact is Jesus did things he shouldn't have done and, like us, he had to learn from them, which he did. The last line of today's lesson tells us that Jesus just didn't hit the earth running with the fullness of God's knowledge and wisdom when it says, "Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor."

Amidst the chaos of that moment, Mary grasped the truth unfolding in her son. I can imagine that for Mary every such moment of watching Jesus grow into the son God shaped in her womb took her back to the day Gabriel greeted her with the news that she would be Jesus' mother. Any parent can relate to incidents when a child acted less than stellar. Often such events are the ones

we end up cherishing the most because they demonstrated how much that particular child needed us and reminded us how much we loved that child.

Jesus never claimed to be a perfect human. He was not some sort of superhuman, or some type of divine “bot” infiltrating the human network. In spite of his imperfections and perhaps because of them, Jesus grew into the forgiving perfection of our Father’s love toward all creation, a task he accomplished on the cross. Jesus did not make this a personal pursuit. Everything Jesus did he envisioned his followers doing because just as what is true about us is true about Jesus, what is true for Jesus must be true for us. As Jesus grew into the perfection of our Father, he encouraged us to seek such perfection, when he said in his Sermon on the Mount, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” [Matthew 5:48].

May we, like Jesus, strive to grow in the perfection of God’s love for all creation as we set our hearts on the pilgrim’s way.

Amen.

HYMN

*Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Nobody knows but Jesus,
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Glory hallelujah.*

*Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down,
Oh, yes, Lord.
Sometimes I'm almost to the ground.
Oh, yes, Lord.*

*Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Nobody knows but Jesus,
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Glory hallelujah.*

*Although you see me going 'long so,
Oh, yes, Lord.
I have my troubles here below,
Oh, yes, Lord.*

*Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Nobody knows but Jesus,
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Glory hallelujah.*

*(Traditional Negro Spiritual)
(From LEVAS II #175)*



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name,
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of Love, we pray for the whole Church and our parish family. Guide your Church and this parish in the way of truth and love.

God of Healing, we pray for all those who are suffering from the effects of Covid-19. We pray for those in church family and those requesting our prayers: Bernard, Sue, Pat Christensen, Bev Ann, Pat Michels, Max, Hawk, Jolene, Darold, Somer, Ryan, and for those we hold in our hearts. On this Sunday we pray for Karen Whitehorse and Max Hawk. May all those in need experience the comfort and healing of your presence.

God of Joy, we pray for those celebrating birthdays: Keenan Luke, (Jan.3), Cathy Unruh and William Plautz (Jan. 4), and Scot Sorensen (Jan. 7). May they find joy, happiness, and fulfillment in the coming year.

God our Protector, we pray for those affected by Covid-19; for healthcare workers around the world; for those who provide essential services, first responders, fire fighters, police. We pray for the leaders of all nations, for all government officials every where, and for all those making decisions in times of crisis. Grant them protection and guide those in authority to make wise decisions.

God our Defender, we pray for the homeless and the jobless in our nation, and for those who have lost their homeland, their sense of security, and who find themselves dependent on the good will of others here at home and in strange lands; that their needs are met and grant them the comfort of your Holy Spirit.

God of Life, we pray for those who have died. May all the departed find life in you.

God of Mission, we pray for all bishops, priests, deacons, and all who serve your Church. Grant them guidance in their various ministries and guide us in our mission to enlarge the Family of Faith in our midst.

A PRAYER FOR PEACE

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

THE PRAYER FOR MISSION

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent you blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near; Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into you fold; pour out you Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of you kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



**MAY THE LORD BLESS US AND KEEP US.
MAY THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON US AND BE
GRACIOUS UNTO US.
MAY THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON US AND GIVE US
PEACE. AMEN**

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