

The First Sunday after Epiphany
St. Luke 2:41-52
January 7th, 2018
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Must Be About My Father's Business

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

The Bible does not really give us much information about the life of our Lord + Jesus until He begins His earthly ministry at around thirty years old. We hear about his birth and infancy, but after that, we hear nothing until our Gospel reading for today, which includes the very first recorded words of our dear Lord + Jesus, spoken when He was twelve years old. What was the young Lord + Jesus like? I'm sure that most parents with young children would probably like to know what it would be like to raise a perfect, sinless child. Imagine a child whose twos were not terrible—no temper tantrums, no back talk, no refusing to go to bed, no fights with His siblings. But, we are not told about any of this. All that we are given by the Evangelist St. Luke is that at the age of twelve our Lord + Jesus was at home in the Temple with the teachers, listening attentively, asking intelligent questions, amazing them with the depth of His insight and understanding. We are also told that He was obedient to His parents. We can assume that if St. Luke had anything more to tell us that we needed to know about our Lord + Jesus' growing up, he would have told us.

St. Luke's silence tells us that our Lord + Jesus grew up like any other boy growing up in Nazareth, playing with the kids in the neighborhood, helping out at home, learning His father's carpentry business, all without the stain of sin. St. Luke summarizes the silent years of our Lord + Jesus' life this way: "*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*" "He was the carpenter's Son, Joseph and Mary's Boy, a good kid," the neighbors would probably say. "He never got in trouble. Except for that one time when His parents couldn't find him for three days. But even then, that was not His fault."

The word that is written across this entire episode is "obedience." Even here, at the age of twelve, He is the obedient Son of His Father in Heaven, and of His earthly parents. His obedience took Him to death on a cross, so that we who are disobedient might share in His perfect obedience as a Son.

Our Lord + Jesus grew up in the home of pious and faithful parents. St. Joseph fulfilled his duties as the head of the family and faithfully kept the requirement that every male was to appear at the Temple in Jerusalem for the Passover. The Blessed Virgin Mary went with her husband, even though she was not required to go. In the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph we have a couple of fine examples of true fatherhood and motherhood—husband and wife helping each other remain faithful, and raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When our Lord + Jesus was twelve years old they brought him along to Jerusalem, though the rabbis said that thirteen was the minimum

age at which a boy took his place with the men of Israel. Then what happens? The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph lose the Boy.

Think of the responsibility resting on the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph's shoulders. They lost God's Son, the Christ, the Light of the Gentiles, the Glory of Israel. Now what? The worried parents turned around and hurried back to Jerusalem. For two frantic days they looked, and on the third day they found the Lord + Jesus safe and sound in the Temple courtyard, sitting quietly with the teachers of the Temple, listening attentively and asking the kinds of questions one did not expect out of a twelve-year-old kid. Why did the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph not think of looking in the Temple in the first place, we might wonder? But then how often do we look to the Church for our Lord + Jesus when we are in a panic?

The first thing the Blessed Virgin Mary does after finding the Lord + Jesus in the Temple is chew him out for being missing. *"Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."* It's a typical panicked mother's reaction. Yet the Lord + Jesus is gentle and respectful to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *"Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"* Our Lord + Jesus was obedient first of all to His heavenly Father. His work was to do the will of Him Who sent Him. He had to be about His heavenly Father's business. That business involved teaching the people the Word of God, and so we are not surprised to learn that our Lord + Jesus was with the teachers in the Temple, amazing them with the depth of His insights and understanding. The student was teaching the teachers. A child was instructing His elders. Did they have any idea that they were being taught by God Himself in the unlikely form of a twelve-year-old Boy?

For a brief moment of motherly panic, the Blessed Virgin Mary forgot Who our Lord + Jesus' Father actually was. And forgetting, she looked for our Lord + Jesus in all the wrong places. Had she recalled the words of the angel and the shepherds and Sts. Simeon and Anna, she might have looked first in His Father's house. If that happens so easily with the mother of our Lord, how much more easily does it happen to us? When we panic, when our life is in disarray, when our children are sick or missing or running amuck, when our marriage is falling apart, and our work is turning up nothing but weeds, we forget Who our dear Lord + Jesus is, Who His Father (and our Father) is, and we forget where He is to be found. We go running around looking all over for a savior, like the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph searching Jerusalem for the Lord + Jesus.

We forget that this humble Savior Who comes in such a lowly way as a twelve-year-old in the Temple, is the Lord of all creation. We forget that this is God's Only-begotten Son, God Himself come down from Heaven in human flesh, the Word and wisdom of God incarnate. We frantically search all over for Him, in our hearts, in our heads, in our feelings. We look everywhere but where He has promised to be for us, in God's Temple, where the Word is preached and taught, where Holy Baptism and Holy Absolution and the Lord's Supper are being given out in His Name, in the Church. That is His Temple, the place where His glory dwells. He is right under our very noses, in His Father's house, among His Father's things, doing exactly what you would expect to find Him doing as God's Son. It is where He promised us that we would find Him. In the Church, wherever two or three are gathered in His Name.

But we are stubborn and slow to learn these things. We wait for one of our own bright bulbs to shed light, when God's Light already beams brightly. There's a type of counseling called, "forgiveness therapy." Dozens of books have been written on the power of forgiving others. In it couples are taught to repeatedly and specifically confess their sins to each other and absolve one another. Parents and children are being told that true healing of their broken relationships comes with forgiveness. That is what we have been saying in Church for the past 2,000 years! Yet because it comes from the Bible and some guy with a funny collar in a medieval bathrobe says it, we think it's a bunch of silly nonsense. But let some Dr. so-and-so with a Ph.D. in psychology from Harvard University say, "Forgiveness heals

relationships,” and he sells a million copies of his book. The only thing missing from the psychologists’ version of forgiveness was the Name of our dear Lord + Jesus, Who is the Source of all forgiveness. Forgiveness without Christ is no real forgiveness, so the twelve-year-old still outdoes the learned doctors of our age.

That’s how Christ always appears in the world, like a twelve-year-old sitting among the great and the wise, the Ph.Ds. and the Th.Ds. He has no credentials, holds no advanced degrees, and has no teaching position at a leading university. But do not be fooled by outward appearances. The words that come from our Lord + Jesus’ mouth utterly amaze the experts. The twelve-year-old Boy in the Temple is the Christ and God Almighty. Do not be fooled by the humility of His Word, the homeliness of the Scriptures, the plainness of preaching, the simplicity of Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. That’s where our dear Lord + Jesus is found, no need to search far and wide looking for Him. That is where you will find Him—in the Temple of the Church, where the Word is preached rightly and the sacraments are administered according to His institution.

It’s interesting that even though our Lord and Savior + Jesus was the Creator Himself; He was still obedient to His parents. This was part of His work of keeping the Law perfectly for us. Though He is the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator of all things, He does not consider it a small thing for Him to be obedient to His parents. When they asked Him to wash the dishes, He washed the dishes. When St. Joseph asked Him to sweep up the wood shavings in His carpenter’s shop, He did that. When they asked Him to take out the garbage, help with dinner, make His bed, He did those things joyfully, lovingly, perfectly, without complaining, or throwing a tantrum.

By His perfect obedience, our Lord + Jesus sanctified all obedience to earthly authority as holy work—it’s part of our vocation, our calling as a Christian to be obedient to the earthly authorities that God has placed over us. When we think that our obedience to our parents, our leaders in government, and our pastors means nothing and that it’s beneath our dignity, we have God in the form of a twelve-year-old boy to remind us that God is pleased when children honor their parents. We also become painfully aware of how far we have fallen short of the Fourth Commandment’s standards, how we do not honor and obey God’s representatives, as we ought, how we complain and moan when we have an authority over us, especially when we dislike the authority who has been placed over us. We must confess that we are disobedient and rebellious children.

It is precisely here that our Savior + Jesus’ perfect obedience provides a comfort for us. He became obedient where we are disobedient. He was the perfect child of His parents, the obedient Son of His Father in Heaven and His mother, where we are not. He gives us His perfect obedience as a free gift. It’s like having an older brother Who never did anything wrong, Who takes all the blame for the bad things that we do, and Who gives us all the credit for what He did. He was obedient even unto death—even death on a cross. The cross is woven throughout this episode from St. Luke’s Gospel. It was the festival of the Passover, the feast in which a spotless lamb was killed, its blood poured out, its flesh eaten as a meal in remembrance of the exodus in which the people of Israel walked to freedom through the blood of a lamb. Twenty-one years later, our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ would again be in Jerusalem for the Passover, and this time to take His place in the Passover as God the Father’s Perfect and Spotless Lamb Whose Blood is our freedom from slavery to sin and death. His body broken. His blood poured out is given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins. *“Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.”* Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away your sins, on account of your faith in Him.

For three days the Blessed Virgin Mary felt the loss of her Son, when He had to be about His Father’s business. She kept all these things that happened that day in her heart, even though she did not fully understand them at the time. When the Blessed Virgin Mary stood at the foot of her Son’s cross, and lost Him again, this time to death and the grave, only to receive Him back again on the third

day risen from the dead, she probably remembered the day in the Temple way back when. Once again, He had to be about His Father's business—dying and rising—to save her and you and me and the world from the wrath that our sins deserve. Our dear Lord + Jesus had been unfairly scolded by his mother in the Temple when He was twelve. He had been innocent. He was only doing what His Father in Heaven had given Him to do. On the cross He was punished for sins that were not His own. And that too was the Father's will: that His sinless Son should become our sin, so that we might stand sinless before God. On this First Sunday after Epiphany, we remember our Lord when he was twelve-years-old in the Temple—obedient to His Father, obedient to His parents, obedient to death on a cross. His perfect obedience means that we can joyfully and confidently be about our Father's business receiving His promised gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation through the means of grace in the temple of the Church. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.