

# Are You About Our Father's Business?

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**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church    Pastor David Labuhn**

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

Time sure does fly, doesn't it? We are already two days into a new year and it seems like it was only a few days ago that it was 2020. Time flies in our Gospel as well. If you were here last week, Jesus was an infant and His mother, Mary, and Joseph brought Him to the temple in obedience to the Law. Jesus was just over five weeks old. They made a sacrifice for the purification of Mary following her giving birth to Jesus and they made a sacrifice of their first-born son, Jesus, dedicating Him to God. This week, St. Luke tells us another story about Jesus, but now He is already twelve years old. What happened in the intervening years?

Information about the early childhood of Jesus is limited. We learn of the birth of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (but not in Mark and John). Luke is the most descriptive. In the Gospel of Matthew, we are told of the attempt on Jesus' life by King Herod after the visit of the Wise Men, but this story is only found in the Gospel of Matthew. We are told that His mother, Mary, and guardian, Joseph, and Jesus are forced to flee to Egypt when He was at least two years old, but not older. The trip to the border was about 75 miles and it was another 100 miles to Jewish settlements in Egypt where the family might find refuge. The next mention of the family by Matthew is their return from Egypt to Nazareth. Because

the Bible does not tell us, Biblical historians say Jesus may have been between three to five years old when his family returned to Nazareth. And the next mention of Jesus in Scripture is in the Gospel of Luke read today. Luke says that Jesus is twelve years of age. There is no other information about the early life of Jesus in the Gospels until He begins His ministry when He is about thirty years old.

Now, there are some purported stories of Jesus' childhood that have been popularized by the media including those from the so-called Gospel of Thomas. None of these are authentic. God chose what He wanted His inspired writers to tell us about the incarnate Jesus. The Gospels were not a biography of Jesus but focus on how Jesus brought us our Salvation. With that in mind, our focus today remains on the Word of God in the Gospel account.

In our Gospel reading today, we are told that Mary and Joseph were returning to Nazareth from celebrating the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. The trip was about 100 miles and took several days. This story does help us realize that Jesus did not live in some sort of sacred vacuum. He had cousins and friends like any normal boy of His age. And, like all boys He got lost. Yes, Mary and Joseph, lost Jesus, the Son of God.

How could this happen? Well, imagine, if you will, that you left a large event with a great number of people and as you departed, you were walking along with all the other people who participated, just as you will do this morning after worship services. Some of these people were relatives and some were friends, but all were people on the move together with you. It would not be unusual for the children

who knew each other to get together and walk together. They might walk first with one family and then with another. You might not pay too close attention to where your children were because everyone looked out for each other's children. You were confident that everyone would be their brothers and sisters' keepers.

As they traveled, Mary and Joseph just assumed that Jesus was somewhere in the crowd playing with His friends and relatives. They might not notice He was missing until they set up camp at the end of the day. Only then, would they look for Jesus among the others and learn that He was not with them. If night had fallen and Jesus was not to be found, imagine the sleepless night they probably had worrying that they had lost Jesus. They had been given the responsibility to raise the Son of God and they had lost Him. It was not safe to return to Jerusalem at night so they had to wait until the next day to search for Jesus. It took three days searching Jerusalem until they finally found Him. And where did they find Him? In the temple, sitting among the learned rabbis and doctors of Theology, both listening to them and asking them questions. And the adults were astonished at His intelligence and His responses to their questions and the questions that He raised to them.

A little background is needed here. At the age of four to five years old, Jewish boys began studying Scripture in the Beth Sefer (the elementary house). At the age of twelve, Jewish boys entered a secondary school called the Beth-hamidrash. The most famous of these secondary schools was in the Temple in Jerusalem and was usually held in one of the halls. It was in this school that Mary and Joseph found

Jesus. He was sitting with the learned teachers and other boys His age and older all gathered for advanced instruction in the Word of God. Outwardly, Jesus took the role of a student, but actually, He was in serious discussions in which He almost served in the function of a teacher with His questions. He was polite and respectful by giving due attention to the explanations of the doctors of Theology, but He amazed all of them with the depth and breadth of His knowledge of the Word of God. After all, He was the Word, according to St. John, and He was dwelling among them.

In the last words of the Gospel last week, we were told by St. Luke ***“And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.”*** (Similar words are found at the end of the reading this week.) Wisdom is an important attribute. It is knowing what is true or right. It is the ability to apply common sense or the collection of one's knowledge to thinking and acting. There are numerous references to wisdom in the Bible. Psalm 111: 10 says, ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”*** And King Solomon the writer of Proverbs, says in Proverbs 1:7 ***“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*** And what is the source of wisdom, we heard in the Old Testament reading this morning the source of wisdom, for the wisest of the Kings of Israel, King Solomon, was from God. His writings in proverbs address wisdom again and again.

And see how this applies to Jesus today. The source of wisdom is the Word of God. Jesus, in His state of humiliation as a man, was studying the Word of God and

growing in wisdom. Notice also, that the Word of God included obedience to God and Jesus, even at this early age, He was obedient to the Law.

Notice His reaction to His mother when she finds Him and admonishes Him saying, *“Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.”* Jesus honored and respected His parents just as He honored and respected His heavenly Father. His answer to Mary was not with arrogance or disrespect, but with the innocence of a boy who had no urgency in going home. Jesus simply said, ***“Why do you seek me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”*** Another translation is: *“Why do you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?”* Jesus subdues His divinity and allows His humanity to prevail. He couldn’t see why His parents thought He was lost. He was taking care of business. He was doing what He was sent to do and He was doing it in the place where He was sent to do it. But in this respect for His parents, He was obedient to them in terms of the Fourth Commandment – He honored them.

And, in His actions, Jesus understood the full meaning of the Second Commandment. He was eager to read, mark, and inwardly digest the Word of God. Jesus saw that the study and understanding of the Word of God were more important than making sure He got home on time. And, for Him, the study of God’s Word was not a burden but a privilege. For Him, the study of God’s Word resulted in His growing in wisdom.

The whole incident reminds me of a story. A little boy was lost in a large shopping mall. He sobbed, *“I want my*

*mommy.*” The mall security people took him under their wing. They treated him to a hotdog, a chocolate milkshake, and a teddy bear to hug. He watched cartoons on the Disney Channel. Eventually, a woman security guard got off the intercom and said to the little boy, *“One of the guards has found your mother.”* The little boy didn’t miss a beat: *“Don’t tell her where I am. I like it here.”*

In today’s Gospel, the twelve-year-old Jesus was lost, but He liked where He was. And, if truth be told, Jesus wasn’t really the lost one. He was in the right place, in the temple. He was *“about the Father’s business.”* In fact, He was taking care of business, the Father’s business, for us. He was doing for us what we intend to do, maybe what we think we’re doing ... we might actually be quite comfortable sitting back sipping a milkshake and watching cartoons, like the little boy in my story, quite content being about our own business and not our Father’s business. All of God’s people here, intend to be about our Father’s business, but are they?

At this time of year, many people resolve, fully intend, to improve this or that in their lives. They make New Year’s resolutions to go on a diet, exercise more, stop smoking, to limit themselves to one martini. How about you? Have you done that? Or, maybe you’ve made resolutions about your spiritual life as well: to follow the example of Mary and Joseph by being more faithful in our Sunday morning worship, to gather here every week around Word and Sacrament. Maybe we’ve resolved to begin regular family devotions, to pray with our spouses and children at meals, before bed, for help, with thanksgiving, for the needs of others. Maybe you’ve made a resolution to put to better

use your talents in the teaching ministry, the music ministry, the men's ministry, the young adult ministry, the women's ministry, or the social ministry of our church. Or maybe you have resolved to give more of your treasure for our mission or the missionaries of the church as a thank offering to God. As believers in Christ, we really do intend to do these things. That's being faithful, being about the Father's business. So how are we doing? Maybe we think, assume, suppose, we're staying pretty well on the task, being about our Father's business—at least so far, just two days into the new year. But, as the busyness of our lives challenges our resolve, we lose sight of our goals to be about our Father's business. And we become the ones who are lost.

Thanks be to God that did not happen to Jesus. He remained committed to being about His Father's business. He would do battle with Satan, perfectly keeping the Law we, his brothers and sisters humanity had failed to keep. He would work miracles of love and healing, freeing those struck down by the effects of sin while others overlook and ignore them. He would gather a following to teach and challenge them to be about their Father's business, but they abandon Him, reject Him, condemn Him, and kill Him. He would accept the whole weight of mankind's damnation for their sins pressed on Him and He would receive the punishment for those sins, our sins. He would even be forsaken by His Father in accepting all that retribution, our retribution for our disobedience. That was the Father's business for Him. Jesus knew all that about Himself from those Scriptures He discussed in the temple. And Jesus would take care of all that business, every detail. For us, all for us, in obedience to His Father.

His wisdom was as great as His obedience to the will of His Father. And it was from the Father that He grew in wisdom and strength. He showed us the way to the Father in His life, and despite our sinfulness, He saved us so we could become wise in faith and love. Today, we learned about a 12-year-old child, who was the Son of God and wise beyond His years and ours. He showed us the way, His way, to the Father. It is through Him and the wisdom of that Way that is the way to eternal life with Him. He was the Word and the Word became one of us to be about His Father's business. So based on the example of Jesus, are you about Your Father's business?

King Solomon, in his wisdom, wrote ***"...if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments...then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."*** It all starts with the Word – Jesus. It all starts with the Word- the Scriptures. And receiving that Word comes the fear of the Lord, the respect and the honor of the Lord. Receiving that Word is the beginning of Wisdom and the way to eternal life. Amen.