

January 2, 2022
Second Sunday After Christmas

“Do You Not Know?”

Luke 2:40-52

Today’s Gospel reading is the only glimpse we have into Jesus’ upbringing beyond His infancy, and that’s likely because Jesus simply didn’t have a remarkable youth. Isaiah 54 seems to indicate the Messiah would be the type of person that blends in, not one who stands out. But this episode does stand out, if for no other reason than the aging Mary was probably quite animated recounting the tale to St. Luke. Can you imagine her worry having her 12-year-old son going missing for three days? The memory of it probably got her blood pumping even decades later.

But it stands out even more because it gives us a glimpse into the psyche of Jesus before His well-documented ministry begins at age 30. It’s not a detailed glimpse for sure. But it does show us where His mind is at: *“Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”* Other valid translations would be, *“Did you not know that I must be about the things of my Father”* or *“...about my Father’s business.”*

Jesus is 12; the age of a “son of the commandment” at which Jewish youth began advanced religious instruction and participation in festivals. It would seem He takes advantage of this transition and the Passover pilgrimage as an opportunity to grill the theologians at the temple about things divine and perhaps about His mission as Messiah in particular. Jesus has obviously done His homework, astounding the teachers with His pointed questions and His amazing insightful answers in their discussions.

But I’m sure Mary would have agreed, reaching the age of a “son of the commandment” doesn’t give you the right to ditch your parents for three days. But looking back, she’d surely admit that she should have known better. Jesus’ words might have stung at the time, but they stung with truth: *“Did you not know...”*

They did know...they just kind of forgot after a while. Both Joseph and Mary know Jesus is the Son of God who will save His people from their sins. They both know who Jesus’ Father is—you know, God. Lots of parents think their kid is special, but this kid knocks it out of the park on that point. But after 12 years of raising Jesus with no problems and no displays of divine power or intervention, I think they just got used to normal life. Then when the abnormal hit, they forgot what Jesus was all about; being God’s Messiah who saves His people from their sins. Where else would He be, should he be, except in God’s house; the temple of Yahweh doing the, you know, Messiah thing.

Jesus at age 1, age 12, age 30, age forever is both God and man, come to save His people from their sins. And this glimpse into His young psyche clues us in that Jesus, even young Jesus, is already about that divine work.

We should remember that. We should remember that especially because we have a tendency to be a lot like Joseph and Mary when it comes to Jesus.

For most of us Jesus has been hanging out in our life since we can remember. We grew up with Him knowing how much He loves us. We’ve prayed and worshiped, enjoyed good times at church with Him and all the nice folks who love Him. Life with Jesus has had some ups and downs maybe, but we’ve always settled into a nice, comfortable routine with Jesus hanging about in our lives.

That’s nice, but Joseph and Mary had the same experience raising Jesus and I think they fell into the idea that they were in charge; that Jesus was theirs to control. When that turned out not to be the case it kind of threw them for a loop.

It's easy for each one of us to fall into that same spiritual malaise. Life goes on relatively normal, Jesus at our side, but we easily begin thinking we're in charge of things. We get comfortable with life that way. We start to neglect thinking of Christ as almighty Lord and Savior from sin and make Him something less. Like Joseph and Mary began pigeon-holing Jesus into the role of "obedient son", we slot Jesus into the "religion" part of our life and the rest becomes, well, ours.

Then maybe we start making accommodation for our favorite sins, have less and less sorrow and contrition over them. Maybe we assume He will always be there so neglect seeking Him out in prayer, devotions and reading of our Bible. And maybe we stop seeking Him out in His Word and Sacraments in the Divine Service at church because it's inconvenient, interferes with life and maybe more so because if we pay attention, we're reminded we aren't in charge.

"*Did you not know...*" Yeah, we knew, but we kind of forgot—forgot that Jesus is our Messiah, our Savior, our Lord and King...and He is the one in charge; the driver of our life, our salvation.

Joseph and Mary realized Jesus was missing and freaked out and hurried back to Jerusalem to find Him. Many so-called Christians today seem to not even have noticed He's gone from their lives. We just celebrated Christmas—the birth of Christ. Yet many folks who would call themselves believers did not go to church—did not even mutter a single prayer of thanks, but they fully enjoyed a wonderful "family" holiday. "*Did you not know...*" Yes, I used too. But I've decided to focus on other things.

Worse yet, others are realizing Jesus is absent and are saying "good riddance". Many are claiming no faith at all, but consciously adopting a secular world view absent any divine authority. "*Did you not know...*" Yes I knew, but I'd rather be a god unto myself and take my chances.

Maybe even worse still, many fool themselves into thinking Christ is still with them, but they've substituted a fraud; linked up with some church that won't proclaim all that nasty sin stuff that call on us to bear fruit of repentance. The Jesus they've found is all about love, blessing, happy spiritual vibes—not so much the things of the Father; the forgiveness of sins. "*Did you not know...*" Yes I knew, but I decided to switch things up a bit, just for fun.

And I don't want y'all who showed up in the pew this morning to get a bloated head. Every single time you've sinned in thought, word or deed; sinned by failing to show love when called for: "*Did you not know...*" Jesus is the loving Lord who paid for these offenses against God in order to take them away from you? And you took them back!

Joseph and Mary made the right move—they freaked out when Jesus was absent and ran back to find Him! They did it because they loved Him as a Son. You do it because you love Him as your Savior and Lord and you know without Him there is no hope of salvation. "*Did you not know?*" Yes you knew, and you doubted, made an idol of something, angered, lied, stole, lusted, coveted, etc. You knew and you sinned anyway.

But do you not know...that Jesus is still today Lord over that sin, calling you to repentance and forgiveness by His Gospel Word? Do you not know that He is there for you in your Holy Baptism, ready and willing to wash away the iniquities of all who return? Do you not know that His Word received and believed is forgiveness itself? Do you not know that the bread and the wine is His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins?

The glimpse into Jesus' childhood shows us that at the age of 12 He was about His Father's business. Theologians reckon that in terms of His human incarnation He is 2025 now. Guess what? He is still about His Father's business and that business is redemption of His fallen creation through the forgiveness of sins. Do you not know that Jesus has accomplished all this by means of the cross and empty tomb? Of course you do. So be alert, not that Jesus is staying by your side, but that you are staying by His. Jesus is still about the Father's business every day, and that business is all about making and keeping you, His. Amen.