

January 5, 2025
Second Sunday after Christmas

“Destiny”

Ephesian 1:3-14

Feel free to disagree with me on this one. The Gospel lesson today is all we have regarding the childhood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Bible doesn't tell us how or if His being fully true God manifested itself in His complete humanity as a youth, so we can only speculate.

But I am intrigued with the possibility that Jesus, in His state of humiliation, did not manifest any of His divinity at all during His childhood to the extent that even He Himself was not aware exactly how His mission of salvation would play out. I assume Joseph and Mary clued Him in to the circumstances of His birth, but it's possible no “divine revelation” took place until later, possibly at His baptism in the Jordan. If that is the case, then Jesus at 12 years old in the temple is amazingly inquisitive and insightful because He is all about finding out how He is going to save His people from their sins. He may have already spent many hours studying the Scriptures in the Nazareth synagogue about this. Luke relates that *“all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers,”* but that doesn't necessarily mean His divine nature is in play—being a perfect, sinless, educated, faithful, human boy would lend itself to some pretty amazing qualities and insights. But, like I said, this is speculation so feel free to disagree.

But if this was the case, with such a glorious divine reality established for young Jesus from the Father on high, yet living a normal, human life, you know what I'm pretty sure never happened? Young Jesus didn't say, “Nah, I'd rather be a professional baseball player.” He didn't rather decide to settle down with a nice Jewish girl, raise a family and enjoy the grandkids. He didn't look around the world and decide, “You know what? I've got better things to do than what the Father has planned!”

Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. His destiny is to save His people from their sins and then rule in eternal glory. Simply by studying the Old Testament prophets Jesus was assured of triumph and majesty. Yes, the passages about a suffering servant, the mocking, scoffing and rejection may have given Him pause and cause for concern, but the end was always victory. Human Jesus, being perfectly faithful to the will of the Father, never sought any other path than what was assured Him in God's Word. That would just be silly, right?

Well folks, allow me to repeat God's promise through St. Paul to you and me, human beings baptized into Christ: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your*

salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

God has established a future for you in glory! This is your destiny. St. Paul is speaking to Christians; baptized believers who struggle with the fallen, sinful human nature, living lives of faithful repentance unto forgiveness of their sins—Christians like you; sinners like you; saints like you.

God has predestined you—and I don’t want us to get all distracted by that term and all the theological questions surrounding it—you have been baptized and thus stand in the promise of God in Christ—adopted by grace as His beloved child forever. You have a present reality as a child of God. You have a glorious future eternity in the presence of God. Paul is stating all this as accomplished fact because we stand blessed by God now and forever.

Like young Jesus then, you have a path unto glory established by God. It sounded really stupid when I suggested Jesus would rather have done something other than be the Messiah. It’s equally as ludicrous that you would choose to be something other than the person adopted into glory that Christ has made you. Just ponder that truth.

And yes, I’m perfectly aware that none of us is Jesus. He perfectly obeys the will of the Father. We stink at submitting our will to His. We struggle mightily. But that’s the point—we struggle mightily in faith to walk in the Way of Jesus because we have this wonderful present reality and future destination!

Idolatry, and all the sin that flows from it, stems from looking around the world and saying, “You know what? I’ve got better things to do than what the Father has planned!” and shoving God’s will to the side in favor of our own. And yes, everybody does it; we’re sinners. St. Paul who writes these words lamented in Romans how much his flesh failed to walk in holiness. The difference is that we do not get comfortable there! Knowing we are destined for holiness in glory, we struggle mightily to stand righteous in Christ each day. We repent. We try to do better. We mourn our failures and plead Christ’s mercy.

The alternative is to embrace the world which is, in effect, saying “So I’m a son or daughter of the Most High God. Nah. I’d rather be a professional baseball player.” That’s just incredibly dumb. That’s chucking the inheritance of eternal life for the fallen and broken life that flourishes for a moment and then is cast into the fire.

And this walk is not easy. It was a struggle even for the perfect Son of God who endured poverty as a youth and then rejection, injustice, contempt, torture and death as an adult. He was tempted, and yet without sin. Yet Hebrews tells us He is “*the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*” Jesus knew where His road led—through the suffering of this world but ultimately to resurrection and the glory of God. The same road to glory is Christ’s gift to us by grace.

And even though we can’t follow perfectly in our thoughts, words and deeds, it does not change God’s grace in Christ. He perfects our weak faith and promises that, when our struggles are ended, He perfects and glorifies our entire being. Like Jesus, we endure this life focused on the divine to which He is leading us.

I may very well be wrong about the divinity of Christ not being manifested at all in young Jesus at the temple. But it’s obvious that Jesus was focused on the Word of God pointing toward our forgiveness and salvation. He faithfully walked the road of the Father’s will, trusting the promise of resurrection and glory.

In Jesus, the same promise is ours. Don't get distracted. Don't get comfortable in the world apart from Him. It is a struggle...so struggle. Repent. Be forgiven. Try to do better. Repent and be forgiven again. This is the faith of following the path Jesus established—but He has indeed established it. Your destiny is to follow...all the way into His glory.

Amen.