

**Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.**

<sup>41</sup> Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. <sup>43</sup> After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. <sup>44</sup> Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup> When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup> When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”

<sup>49</sup> **“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”** <sup>50</sup> **But they did not understand what he was saying to them.**

<sup>51</sup> **Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.** <sup>52</sup> **And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. This is God’s Word.**

**Dear Friends,**

This past year Dawn and I have seen all of our grandchildren. That’s always enjoyable because they are all growing and changing so quickly. It’s always neat to see the changes and to note how each child is unique.

We just celebrated the birth of the Christ child but we don’t know a lot about the childhood of Jesus. We know the shepherds came to see him on the night he was born. We know the Magi from the East came to worship him sometime during the next year of his life. We know that his parents took him to Egypt so King Herod couldn’t kill him and a few years later they all returned and settled in Nazareth but that’s all that is recorded in scripture about the childhood of Jesus except for the story before us today. Naturally, we are curious to know “What Kind of Kid was Jesus.”

Today, as we take a look at this account from Jesus’ life, we can see that, **“He regularly worships in his Father’s house,” “He regularly studies his Father’s Word,”** and **“He obediently does his Father’s will.”**

**I. “Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.”** Old Testament Law required all Jewish males to attend three festivals a year in Jerusalem: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The Babylonian exile changed the people’s understanding and ability to do this. During the 70 years in Babylon they hadn’t been able to follow this law and many had forgotten about it. Once they returned, the Jewish people were somewhat scattered and distance was a great barrier to following this law. Many people only came to Jerusalem for one of the festivals and that was the custom of Mary and Joseph and their family. To make an annual trip to Jerusalem for the Passover.

Only Joseph and the male members 12 and older were required to go, but Mary and Joseph had decided that this should be a family event and so they all traveled to Jerusalem for the seven days of festivities and rituals. Many of the travelers would sing the Psalms of ascent (120-134) as they would travel “up” to Jerusalem.

The age of Jesus is mentioned specifically in this portion of scripture because 12 was the age where a male Jewish child would become what was known as “a son of the law.” At the age of 12, a young man would have to learn the Old Testament laws and also observe or keep them. As you might imagine, this would require some intense training by the father of the house as well as the local rabbis.

As you think about your families worship life, how does it compare to the worship life of Joseph’s family? When we lived out in Idaho, there was a family that didn’t come to church very often. When we visited them, the Dad explained that he was on the road all week and only home with his family on the weekends and he needed to spend quality time with his wife and kids.

There is no better quality time than to gather around God’s Word with your family. To teach your children, by example, that God’s Word is an important aspect of your life and theirs. To refresh yourselves through the comforting words of forgiveness and prepare yourselves for all the challenges in the upcoming week. Hearing and studying God’s Word is not an option for Christians, it’s a necessity. That’s one lesson we can learn from Jesus as he stayed behind when his parents left Jerusalem.

**II.** Some might wonder if Jesus was being disobedient when he stayed behind. After all, the family had been making this journey for years. Apparently they had a regular routine when leaving. The parents probably walked together visiting with each other as they walked along and the kids probably traveled in a group, playing with each other along the way. At the end of the day, when the group stopped for the evening meal, families came together to eat and then bed down together for the night. On the evening of the first day of travel, when Mary and Joseph were gathering their family together to eat, Jesus was nowhere to be found. After some frantic checking, it soon became apparent that he had not been with the group the whole day.

**“When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”** Did they spend three days looking for Jesus? Probably not. The three days included their first day of travel, another day of travel to return to Jerusalem and then the third day was devoted to the search. They probably checked out the marketplace, maybe the place they had stayed while in Jerusalem and finally went to the temple. Maybe because Jesus showed an interest in the temple or because they wanted to pray and ask for God’s help – we don’t know – but that’s where they found their missing son.

Jesus was sitting and asking questions. Here we encounter the mystery of the incarnation. He was like any other boy and yet he wasn’t like any other boy. As true God he would have known all things and yet as true man he was growing in his knowledge and understanding like any other boy but with the great difference that he wasn’t plagued by the limitations of the sinful flesh. He didn’t have to fight the natural sinful resistance to the Gospel and/or God’s revelations. The

amazing result was that as the rabbis answered his questions, he was able to tie everything they told him from the scriptures together in perfect harmony. I would guess that Mary and Joseph listened to this question and answer period for a bit of time because they were amazed at the conversation that was taking place too. But they shouldn't have been.

Mary and Joseph knew that Jesus was special. They knew that he was the Son of the Most High – the Son of God. They should not have been surprised at his location or his questions and yet Luke records their response, **“When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” Listen to Jesus answer, “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”** Jesus was already preparing himself for what would follow in another 18 years. This was part of his regular study of God's Word.

A reminder that we should be about our Father's business too – studying his Word in amazement at God's love for us in sending his Son and amazed at all the practical advice God's Word has for us as we try and live a Christian life. In a few days some of you will make New Year's resolutions. Maybe one of those resolutions might be to get into the Word and learn more about God's will for your life. God's Word never stops speaking to us – there is always something more to learn. Just as we want to be obedient to God's Word, so Jesus was obedient to his Father's will.

**III.** Did you notice that as Jesus talked about being in his Father's house he was also making the connection between God the Father and himself as God's Son. In this way he was explaining to Mary and Joseph and to us that he was sent to earth for a purpose – to do his Father's will. We know that later in life this would include the journey to the cross to pay for our sins but at this point in the life of Christ he was also keeping God's law perfectly for us and that included obedience to his parents. Even though they didn't understand everything that was going on, **“He went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup> And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”**

He returned home and continued to grow physically as well as in spiritual knowledge and he grew in favor with God and men. He really was the perfect child and he was following the Father's plan of salvation – perfectly. Mary treasured all these things – i.e. she remembered them – filed them away in her mind as significant events she would later recall.

We, too want to be obedient to the Father's will. We can't do it in a perfect way as Jesus did, but we can grow in our spiritual wisdom and as we grow in that spiritual knowledge God will give us strength through his Word to do his will. There are many influences that try and draw us away from the Father's will. Influences of the world and influences of our own sinful nature. It is only by staying close to our God that we can recognize these influences and resist the temptation to travel down the wrong path.

This past week we celebrated the birth of the Christ child. We don't know a lot about his childhood but we know what's important – he regularly worshiped in God's house and studied

God's Word. He grew in wisdom and stature and he was obedient to the will of his Father – even going to the cross to redeem us.

May we believe and trust in this Christ child for our salvation. May we regularly worship in God's house and study God's Word so that we can grow in wisdom and stature and with God's help, live a life of obedience to our Lord and Savior. Amen.