

“Jesus Was Obedient for Us”

(Luke 2:41-52 – Christmas 1 – December 29, 2024)

Luke 2:41-52 – ⁴¹*His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.* ⁴²*And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.* ⁴³*When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it;* ⁴⁴*but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day’s journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances.* ⁴⁵*So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.* ⁴⁶*Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.* ⁴⁷*And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.* ⁴⁸*So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”* ⁴⁹*And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”* ⁵⁰*But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.* ⁵¹*Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.* ⁵²*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ, who lived His whole life for us as our perfect Savior:

Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem at the age of 12 is the only account recorded in Scripture from His boyhood. Here we see Jesus in His heavenly Father’s house, eager to learn from Scripture. At the same time, we see Him showing obedience to His earthly parents. Besides this glimpse of our Savior as a boy, with the concluding remark that “*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*” (vs. 52), nothing more is said of His boyhood. The next accounts in the Gospels show Him at the beginning of His public ministry, at age 30, coming to be baptized by John.

Yet in this brief account, we learn something important about His life – that from early on, “**Jesus Was Obedient for Us.**” Let us see how **1) He was obedient to His heavenly Father’s will**, and **2) His obedience is for our comfort and salvation.**

1) He was obedient to His heavenly Father’s will

At first glance, it may seem as if He was not being obedient to His earthly parents. After all, as Joseph and Mary were returning home to Nazareth after the Passover Feast, Jesus did not go with them as they expected. He stayed behind in Jerusalem, doing what He thought was important.

But as the sinless Son of God in human flesh, Jesus never once misbehaved in childhood. His parents could fully trust Him, because He always did what was right. This begins to explain why Joseph and Mary would go a whole day’s journey without checking to see that Jesus was

with them. They just assumed He would be among the relatives and friends with whom they traveled to observe the Passover.

But after a day's journey, they noticed Jesus missing. Didn't He know this would greatly trouble His earthly parents? They had to go all the way back to Jerusalem, searching everywhere for Him. Imagine the stress and anxiety, the sorrow and fear, as thoughts of danger came to mind. Remember how, before Jesus was even two years old, His parents had to flee from a jealous King Herod who killed all the little boys in Bethlehem, just trying to get rid of Jesus? Even though Jesus was innocent, there was no promise that His life would be free of danger.

If you have ever lost a child, you know something of the anxiety and fear it must have caused Mary and Joseph. But there was added dimension. Imagine their self-condemning thoughts as they made their way back to Jerusalem: "Is God upset at us for having been so negligent in caring for His Son? Have we proven ourselves unfit to be the earthly parents of Christ? What are all sins compared to losing this Child?" Every parent can sympathize to some extent, with a feeling of failure at times to do all we should have done with the children God has entrusted to us.

Like Joseph and Mary, our lives too are defined by our relationship to Jesus as God's Son, our Savior. Just like them, there is no promise that our lives will be free of trials. In many ways, we bear a cross as we walk with Jesus through this world. We do not always know why things happen the way they do, bringing anxiety, fear, and sorrow. We may not understand how God is working in all things for our good, when everything seems so out of order. For His ways are higher than our ways.

At last, on the third day, Joseph and Mary found the boy Jesus in the temple. Mixed emotions of relief and frustration came out in Mary's words: "*Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously*" (vs. 48).

Jesus' response was not what they expected: "*Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?*" (vs. 49). Was Jesus talking back to His parents disrespectfully, as we have been inclined to do at times in our youth? Not at all. Such an attitude was impossible for the perfect Son of God. He was obedient in all things to His heavenly Father's will. And His Father's will was that He submit to His earthly parents. Jesus was not being disrespectful. He was speaking the truth in love to them about His relationship to His heavenly Father.

It says of Joseph and Mary: "*But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them*" (vs. 50). As the earthly parents whom God chose to raise His Son, they needed to understand Jesus' true place in the world. Even as a boy, Jesus knew He was the Son of God. Of course, this had also been revealed to Joseph and Mary before His birth. They knew He was the eternal Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb (Luke 1:35). They knew

He was born to be the Savior for all people. But they were learning how all this was to play out in His life. With all respect, Jesus was telling them: “Don’t you see that in staying behind, I was not being disobedient. For I owe My obedience above all to My Father in heaven. I was being about My Father’s business here in His house.”

In wanting to be in His Father’s house, even from childhood Jesus was fulfilling all righteousness as our Savior. He was keeping the Third Commandment: *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”* (Exodus 20:8). When Jesus came to the house of God, it was not just because His earthly parents wanted Him to be there. It was obedience to His heavenly Father. He wanted nothing more than to hear and learn His Father’s Word and live by it in everyday life, even apart from His parents’ urging. So it says: *“they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions”* (vs. 46).

This account of the boy Jesus in the temple reveals a mystery about His person, as true God and true Man. As God who knows all things, why did He have to study God’s Word, ask teachers questions, and learn? It is because, during His life on earth, He set aside full use of His divine power. We call this Jesus’ state of humiliation. This is why He had to study and learn, just like any other twelve-year old. The difference is that, as the Son of God, He studied in perfect obedience to His Father. He absorbed the truth of God’s Word with a heart and mind unhindered by any sin. As the verse before our text states: *“The Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him”* (vs. 40). So it says here: *“All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers”* (vs. 47).

Not only did Jesus keep the Third Commandment, honoring God’s Word with heartfelt obedience. He also kept the Fourth Commandment: *“Honor your father and your mother”* (Exodus 20:12). For after speaking His heavenly Father’s truth in love to His earthly parents, it says: *“Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them”* (vs. 51). Jesus continued to be submissive to those His Father put in authority over Him in the home, honoring and obeying them.

Not only did He keep the Third and Fourth Commandments; He kept all of them. Jesus never put anything before His Father’s will – no other gods, no other desires. All He wanted was to fulfill His Father’s laws and obey His holy will in all His life.

2) His obedience is for our comfort and salvation

Now let us consider what comfort Jesus’ perfect obedience gives us. Honestly, if His life were just an example we had to follow to get right with God, it would be no comfort to us. We know that from childhood, we have not been perfect like Jesus. We have not always had our hearts into hearing God’s Word and keeping it holy in our lives. We have not always honored our parents, submitting and obeying as we should, speaking the truth in love to them. Nor as parents have we always done the right thing in raising our children, setting a perfect example in word and deed. We could never live up to Jesus’ perfect example; so we could never become worthy of being called children of the perfect heavenly Father by our obedience.

But the comfort in Jesus' perfect obedience is that He fulfilled all of God's Law for us. From His youth – even from His conception by the Holy Spirit and His birth – Jesus was perfect for you and me. All during His life – even to His death on the cross for our sins – Jesus was perfect for us. It was so that His entire life could sanctify our entire lives, even from conception unto death. Even from childhood, Jesus made those deeds of everyday life holy. He washed the dishes, He helped with the chores, He swept the floor in His father's carpenter shop. Even as a little child, there was Jesus was keeping the Third and Fourth Commandments, and all the rest. And it was all to fulfill them for you and me.

Jesus knew why He was in this world. He was all about His heavenly Father's business of saving us sinners. Galatians 4:4-5 says: "*God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*" Jesus was born under the law to redeem us from our failure to obey God's law. But this took more than just fulfilling the law for us. As the Scriptures He studied so well from His youth testified, redeeming us meant He must also suffer and die for our sins. All our disobedience to God's commandments had to be paid for by the sacrifice of His innocent blood on the cross. For only in this way could He redeem us from our sins and reconcile us to His Father.

What comfort it gives us to know that Jesus has done it all for us. His righteous life is counted to us. His innocent death has taken away our sin and eternal death. Through Holy Spirit-given faith in God's Son, we "*receive the adoption as sons.*" This means we inherit with Jesus all the blessings of God's children. We inherit eternal life in His heavenly Kingdom.

And along the way, even when we have those days like Joseph and Mary – days fraught with stress and anxieties, sorrows and fears – that does not change the fact that our heavenly Father is still working in all things for our good. And even when it seems Jesus is out of the picture and we have lost Him, it will not happen; Jesus says: "*I am with you always; I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5).

Let us rejoice to be with Jesus in our heavenly Father's house, hearing His Word of promise. Like Joseph and Mary, there is no need to run around searching anywhere else. Day by day, we know where to find Him. He is here for us in His Word and Sacraments, bringing us all the blessings of His salvation and eternal life. And one day Jesus will bring us, with all His family of believers, into His Father's house that He is preparing for us in heaven (John 14:2).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.