

*The First Sunday After Christmas*  
December 30, 2012  
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 2:41-52

*Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 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.” “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (NIV)*

My children continue to amaze me. The things children do. The things they say. It is truly amazing to watch how much they learn and how fast they grow. If you have your own little ones perhaps you too witness how quickly they pick things up. The phrases and expressions - you wonder where in the world they get them all from. Children are a wonderful blessing, each one unique and full of surprises – some of them full of more surprises than others.

If this is true for us with our own children imagine how much more this must have been true for Mary and Joseph! When the child they were entrusted with was born the angels filled the skies and sang in joy. Shepherds came to see them because they heard the good news of a Savior born that day. Later wise men from afar came to worship this newborn King. We are told Mary pondered all these things and treasured them in her heart. Again while all children are a wonderful blessing from God, each one unique and full of surprises, how much more this Child! This morning we get a small glimpse into the childhood of the most wonderful, unique Child ever born. This morning I pray we are amazed as we see a young Jesus and ask with the hymn writer: **What Child is This?**

Our text gives us a little insight to what is often referred to as the silent years of Jesus’ life. Luke tells us the beloved details of our Savior’s birth and adds information of Jesus being presented in the temple on the eighth day. Matthew records the visit of the Magi. And that is it! The last thing we hear about Jesus in the Scriptures before Jesus is 30 years old and ready to begin His public ministry is right here.

This account begins: *“Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.”* The Passover was the biggest of the three main festivals that the Jews celebrated. This commemorated the redemption of Israel from Egypt and every Jewish male was commanded to go to Jerusalem for this Feast once a year. The women could

also come along to celebrate and worship God on this occasion. At this time of history there were many Jews scattered that did not go to Jerusalem for the festivals. But Joseph, and even Mary, faithfully went once again as we are told they did every year. They took their twelve year old boy, Jesus, along with them.

When the Passover celebration was over Mary & Joseph started to return home while: ***“Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem.”*** And Mary & Joseph ***“were unaware of it.”*** They had friends and relatives traveling with them and assumed Jesus was with one of them. After all, think about it - it wasn't like Jesus was a child who ever gave them any trouble being perfect and all. ***“Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day.”*** But when they began to look for Jesus among their friends and relatives they did not find him.

Now perhaps some of us may be able to relate to this situation. I remember when Katie was two or three years old I had her with me at the Boone County Fair because we had a booth for our church there. She was with me in the booth and I was talking to someone and when I finished talking I looked and she was gone. I don't know if I've ever been as scared as I was in those few minutes I frantically searched for her. Your thoughts go to a bad place and you think the worst. Now can you imagine Mary's thoughts? ***“Where is our boy? We lost him. Jesus isn't anywhere. What happened to him? I hope someone didn't take him. This isn't just any child- this is God's Son and the only Savior of the world. God gave me this awesome privilege and responsibility and I blew it!”*** So ***“when they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.”*** And I would guess they made better time on the way back, probably running back to Jerusalem. Finally, the frantic search ends. ***“After three days they found him sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”*** What Child Is this? Jesus isn't off playing or getting into trouble. He is in the temple hearing the Word of God. He is sitting among the rabbi's learning and answering questions.

***“Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”*** The teachers and people who heard Him are amazed at the knowledge and understanding this boy has of the Scriptures. What child is this? Like any other child, he was learning and growing and gaining understanding. But unlike any other child He did not have any sin that interferes with the understanding and learning of God's Word. His understanding and complete trust in that Word showed itself in His answers. Joseph and Mary too are astonished at this sight of their twelve year old boy listening to and instructing others in God's Word. Never has anyone heard of or seen a child like this!

I tried to go back and think of what I was like at twelve years old and in about 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I certainly didn't join in many studies with theologians. If I was away from my parents, I was probably tossing a ball through some window, or riding my bike where I was told not to go, or goofing around with my friends. Please don't misunderstand, I was blessed with very faithful parents who did a good job of teaching me about God and I knew my Savior loved me and I loved Him. But I certainly didn't always put God's Word as my highest priority in life at age twelve. In fact, we do, as adults, even now? Do we make time for God's Word a priority? We can learn something from this amazing Child today? If Jesus, the sinless Son of God, felt it was important to be in God's house to hear His Word, how much more do we need to be here! How much more do we need to worship and give careful attention to God's Word every week! Jesus did, even at the age of twelve. Indeed: What Child is this?

After Mary and Joseph got over their astonishment Mary asked Jesus: ***“Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”*** Certainly, Mary’s emotions are running high. Upset that she lost her boy and had to search for three days she asks: Why? Why did you allow us to look for you for three days? Listen to Jesus’ answer. He answers with two questions. ***“Why were you searching for me?”*** Jesus had no intentions of hurting his parents. He did not even know they were searching so frantically. The fact is they are the parents who left without making sure he was along.

Secondly, Jesus was caught up in what He came to do. ***“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”*** Literally, the original Greek reads: ***“Didn’t you know I had to be about the things or affairs of my Father?”*** The King James reads ***“about my Father’s business.”*** Jesus is right where God wanted him to be - hearing and learning and sharing His Holy Word. In this answer is also a gentle rebuke for His mother Mary. Yes, Jesus listened to and loved his mother. Yes, Mary had a tremendous responsibility to take care of this child, but this is also God’s child. He came for the sins of the world, which includes His mother’s sins too. He had even greater responsibilities and things to accomplish as God’s Son. One of those is to be perfectly obedient, and Jesus is that - the perfectly obedient Son – to God and also to His parents. At the command of his earthly parents: ***“Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.”*** Jesus always followed the fourth commandment to honor his parents. Not understanding what Jesus meant by everything or exactly what took place, Mary, ***“his mother, treasured all these things in her heart.”*** And this Son of hers, God’s Son, ***“grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”***

It had to be an awesome thing to watch Jesus grow and learn. I only know what it is like to be a sinner growing up with a sinful sister and sinful brothers. As a parent it didn’t take me long to see that my sinfulness is also in my children. Imagine a child who always obeyed – a child who was perfect in every way – a child who already at the age of twelve could hang with the teachers in the temple! What Child is this? He is more than a child sent to amaze us. He is the Child sent to save us. This Child is true man, but He is also true God. This Child came to take our place, to be our substitute under God’s law and keep those laws for us. For ***“When the time had fully come, God Sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons”(Galatians 4).***

What Child is this? Mary and Joseph, we, have just seen the beginning for Jesus would do much greater things than this. This is indeed a Child unique and full of surprises. This is for certain a Child which is a gift of God. This is the promised Savior of the world. This is the Child who was always about His Father’s business. What Child is this? We know, dear friends, don’t we? **Nails, spear shall pierce him through; the cross he’ll bear for me, for you. Hail, hail, the Word made flesh, The babe, the Son of Mary! (CW 67) Amen.**

