

Luke 2:41-52. Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ 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." ⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Stay close to Jesus.

Fix your eyes on his extraordinary work.

Treasure who he is and what he came to do.

Grow continually in his marvelous love.

Maybe the wonder of it all had eroded a bit with the years. After seeing their human child live in their presence under their care day after day, perhaps they lost sight of who this child really was. Had they moved back to Nazareth and left behind some of the majesty that surrounded Bethlehem's manger? I don't think we can blame Mary and Joseph too much for their anxious commotion as they had become separated from their child, and their frantic questioning of Jesus when they finally found him. They were, after all, his earthly parents and caretakers of this child that God had given to them. They loved him and cared for him, as he was their dear son. But the question that Jesus asked his parents would certainly be a valid one. How could they not have known or guessed that Jesus was in the temple? He was God's Son after all? Well, Mary and Joseph were likely prone to that habit of human nature that lives a little too much in the moment and easily loses sight of the big picture. After all, it was twelve years since the extraordinary events of his birth. There was of course the visit of the magi, the trip down to Egypt, the return to Nazareth, between his birth and this moment in time. However, there were hundreds upon

hundreds of somewhat ordinary days in between. Their son was an obedient, wonderful child, who loved God and loved his parents. There doesn't seem to be much more to report other than Jesus was the perfect son. Days upon days of this extraordinary child living an ordinary life under the care of his earthly parents.

However, it very much seems that Mary and Joseph needed this reminder: their son was the Son of God. In the passing of the years, in the ebb and flow of ordinary daily life and routine, the focus on God's amazing plan of salvation, could be lost in the shuffle even among the family of Jesus. Therefore, as Mary and Joseph come and find the boy Jesus in the temple, in God the Father's house, we hear the Son of God, who is also the Son of Man, give a gentle rebuke. And in these words, Jesus is not only reminding Mary and Joseph, but reminding us all, of the majesty of who he was and what he had come to do. ⁴⁹ ***"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"***

In these days after Christmas let us not lose sight that the one born in Bethlehem is God's Son. So dear friends, **stay close to Jesus. Fix your eyes on his extraordinary work of salvation. Treasure who he is and what he came to do. Grow continually in his marvelous love.**

It has only been a few days since our celebration of Christmas and maybe the luster of this holy day has already begun to fade. Some of the radio stations have switched back to regular programming, the special services have been held and filed away in our memory banks, the family gatherings have taken place or are now wrapping up. Maybe you have even used some of the snowy days to pack away some of the Christmas decorations as you were trapped in the house without much else to do. And if things have not already fallen back into their ordinary routine, they will soon. With this return to the ordinary there comes the temptation to lose sight of the extraordinary things that we have just celebrated. God came to earth to save us. A child was born for us, he is Christ the Lord. In our sin, we could not come to God, or find him, and yet he comes to us. He comes to us, he comes for us. He is our light in the darkness. The child born in Bethlehem is both the Son of God and the Son of Man. He comes to be our substitute. He comes to be our Savior. The Word becomes flesh to shed his blood for us, to die, to rise, to live. The Word becomes flesh to live our life perfectly, to be Our Righteousness.

These bright and marvelous truths of Christmas do not fade with time, or disappear with the season, or are simply to be put away when the festival has been celebrated, but the good news of Christmas continues to shine with its brilliant gospel light the whole year through. In his great love the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Now we are privileged and honored to watch and listen to the Word as we learn how Jesus grows into the man, the Savior, that God the Father had sent him to be. In the next few weeks we will recall how we was born to save all people and nations, how he was the Chosen One who came to carry

our sin, who came to preach and teach the good news of salvation. We will learn again how he came with compassion to save us, to give us hope, and comfort, peace and joy. Even now as Christmas has dawned, we can see a glimpse of his death and resurrection on the horizon. Jesus was born for us, to die for us, but remember he also came to live for us, to preach the word, to display the love of God in a way that communicates his generous and abundant love. There is so much to take in, so much to treasure, so much to see and stand in awe of, in the extraordinary life and work and the mission of our Savior Jesus Christ.

However, the sinful nature may be lulled rather easily into making these extraordinary truths into an ordinary routine that may be glanced over or skipped altogether. We are tempted to quickly leave behind the marvel of God's own Son placed in a manger bed as something that just comes and goes every year. We are tempted to leave the Christmas scene and not come back until the next major festival, because the rest is somehow viewed as just ordinary.

There had to be some of that same sentiment in the crowd of family that moved on from Jerusalem without Jesus. It was required by the law that every Jewish male would come in and celebrate the Passover, and so knowing human nature, it of course happened that some came and left without much pondering on what God had done for them. Instead of basking in the marvelous message of deliverance, celebrating the depth and the promise of this celebration of the Passover, many people, no doubt, coldly went about the routine of coming in the festival, leaving when it was over, and they would probably not think about such things until they came back for the next festival. This was hardly the kind of relationship that God wanted for his people.

Look at where Jesus is. See him in his Father's house, going about his Father's business, learning about his Father's Word. This is the relationship God desires with his children. We see Jesus here in this lesson, not only serving as our perfect substitute, but here he is reminding us of this continual bond that we have been blessed with as the children of God. Coming in for the festival, remaining in the presence of God with a hunger to learn more.

Yes, the festival of Christmas has come and gone, but each day we too can learn more about our Lord. Even Jesus sat and learned from the Scriptures. Even Jesus had a desire to ask questions and learn more as he talked about the Scriptures. At an age of 12, when human interests and emotions are so often pulled in so many directions, he remained focused on his task to save us. He had laid aside his glory, went through all the temptations they we go through and yet he was able to faithfully go about his mission of Savior and found joy in learning more about God his Father. Fix your eyes on Jesus and see how Jesus took on the challenges of living in this sinful world and how he never lost sight of his mission to save us. He came for more than just Christmas and Easter. He came for more than just a birth and

death. Jesus lived his entire life for you. He obeyed his Father's will, and he was obedient to his earthly parents. He loved and obeyed his imperfect parents, even when they didn't always "get him" or understand him, but still he treated them with gentleness and respect, honor and obedience.

Fix your eyes on Jesus and see in this young man your Savior. Treasure who he is and what he came to do for you. Look at Jesus and stay close to Savior throughout the year. Be in God's house. Welcome him into your home through daily devotions and bible study. Come along for the journey week after week, Sunday after Sunday, as we are reminded of who this extraordinary child is and what he came to do. Watch, listen, learn, and grow in your understanding and appreciation of what God does for you in Christ Jesus.

He comes with a righteousness that covers over all your mistakes, your faults, your sins, your offenses. He who was perfect in every way in his love for God and for his neighbor, does this all not to show you up, not to leave you anxious, and guilty, but to save you. We could never copy his life, we certainly were not this pious and scholarly and about the ways of God at any age of our life (certainly not at 12 years old), and yet Jesus comes for our sake. He learns, he grows, he loves his God perfectly, and he does it all for us, in our place, in our flesh. How amazing, how extraordinary, that the Son of God, would go through all of this for us, so that one day we might share in his glory and be with him and our Father in heaven eternally.

So dear friends, stay close to Jesus. Fix your eyes on his extraordinary work. Treasure who he is and what he came to do. Grow continually in his marvelous love. For the Son of God comes in our flesh, to take on all the challenges of life, and to be perfect in our place. The Son of God, the Word made flesh, comes to strengthen our bond with the Father. Listen, Look, and Marvel at the words and works, the mission of our Savior. His is a life lived in love for God and love for you. Amen.