

January 04, 2026

Luke 2:40-52

**“Jesus Must Be In His Father’s House!”**

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 North Oakland Ave.  
Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Bible is almost entirely silent on the childhood of Jesus. Yet legends about Jesus' early years were circulated in the spurious and apocryphal writing known as *the Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. The text describes the life of Jesus from the ages of 5 to 12. In one tale, Jesus turns clay into living sparrows. In another, he curses a boy who drains a pool of water he had created, causing the boy to die. In still other fictional stories he carries water on cloth, produces a feast from a single grain, and stretches a beam of wood to help his father finish constructing a bed. They are silly stories with no saving content and only distract us from the real record of Scripture.

It never ceases to amaze me how people are always much more interested in extra-Biblical material when they should just simply read the extraordinary testimony of Scripture. But that's what the devil and the unbelieving world does while our sinful flesh is always ready to follow along. They want us to look for something outside of what God has given because what God has set forth in the holy Bible is about sin and forgiveness. And that is what our gospel lesson is all about - sin and forgiveness - deliverance!

Like I said, the Bible is almost entirely silent on the childhood of Jesus. But, in our gospel lesson, Luke gathers all of the years of our dear Lord's youth into this one account and, in doing so, the Holy Spirit would have us accept that this is all we really need to know. And we have a jewel of an incident that will foreshadow and capture the reason why Jesus was born. In this short record we have a summary of what will be the entire service of our Savior that reminds us of the cross looming over the manger of Jesus in front of our church. And so the theme: **Jesus Must Be In His Father's House!**

To understand why **Jesus Must Be In His Father's House**, Luke gives us information that will naturally take us to the heart and center of who Jesus is and his destiny in Jerusalem. The account begins: "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom." This historical narrative is more than something to feed our curiosity. This is the feast of Passover. This is the most important redemptive event of the Old Testament, which foreshadowed the work of the Savior of the world. The Lord God delivered the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt because of the blood of the lamb on the lintel and posts of the door. Egypt was sin, death, and the devil, and the blood of the lamb was to indicate what would be necessary for the Savior to do to deliver us.

Jesus was 12 years old - the age where a Jewish boy is considered to be at the age of maturity in religious matters. In other words, he is now at the very beginning of adulthood which points to matters of his destiny as an adult in accordance with Scripture. In this text, his destiny is mentioned three times in three different verses - the city of Jerusalem - which is the city of peace in the presence and work of the Lord. Luke writes: "And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem," which is where he belongs, in his Father's house. He has come home to the place which is about our salvation. Having reached the age of maturity in religious matters he will make it plain to his mother and his stepfather that being the Son of God in the flesh, and everything in his life, is leading to and is always about the destination of his death as the Passover lamb and the eternal life he gives.

The actions of Jesus are foreshadowing his work and goal in a most dramatic way. Luke goes on to record for us:

And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished.

While the description of this way of travel may sound strange to us, it was the way in which people traveled in the time of Jesus and was perfectly normal. People formed in groups to be there for one another and for protection. When Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus among their relatives and acquaintances, they returned at once to Jerusalem for a diligent and anxious search.

We are told that after three days they found him in the temple, with the teachers, listening and asking questions. They were amazed at his understanding and his answers. Now, by the age of twelve, a boy is considered a young man and "a son of the Law." Jesus had been receiving formal instruction since the age of 5 and had studied Leviticus and other books of the Bible. Luke is recording for us his training for the moment when he will reach the age of thirty and begin his holy ministry. He is growing like a human being in every day life, but is truly exceptional and amazing to those who are highly educated and old. We should be very thankful to have Jesus' words and works recorded for us in the Bible, as they point to the fulfillment of God's grace in the forgiveness of our sins.

The loss of Jesus for three days is significant as it foreshadows the death of Jesus and his three day burial in the tomb. He becomes lost to Mary and Joseph, which is what happened when he died on the cross. And when Mary and Joseph found him after three days we are seeing a foreshadowing of his resurrection and appearances. This is made evident by two things. First, we must not forget that the context of this entire episode is the Passover, which is the historical outline for the work of Jesus and our deliverance. He came into the world to preach repentance and good news and to die and rise from the dead so that we might have the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and rescue [exodus] from death and hell.

The second thing that we must consider are the words of Jesus in our gospel lesson, which further support what I am saying to you. We read: "And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.' And he said to them, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'" **Jesus Must Be In His Father's House!** He must be among the works of his Father. The weight of that statement is hard to initially grasp until you consider the function of the house (or temple), which is all about the Christ. First, God is his Father. He is the Son of God incarnate and the fulfilment of the temple. Second, the text is saying that it is "necessary" for Jesus to be there. You see, Jesus is the washing from the basin, the lamb on the altar, our high priest, the presence of the Lord, and

our entrance into paradise. God will only be found in the ministry of the Word made flesh or the temple incarnate (Jesus). Everything with which we might comfort ourselves in this life must be abandoned. In our distress we search for the one who is lost to us and find him doing the business found in his Father's house for you and me. To paraphrase Luther: "... there is no true comfort until Jesus is sought in the temple, where he is about his Father's business [which is our salvation]. There he will certainly be found, and the heart will be joyful again."

When Jesus said to Mary and Joseph: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" they did not understand. But hopefully we now understand. The destiny of Jesus was to be found in all that Jesus was doing and was going to do according to what was foreshadowed in the Father's house - the temple. As a "son of the Law," though he will obediently return with Mary and Joseph, his entire life serves nothing but his destiny of death and resurrection in Jerusalem and our deliverance from sin, death, and hell. Mary treasured these words and happenings in her heart. That means that she kept them in a special place and in special consideration. They no doubt became crystal clear when she stood at the foot of the cross in which her son died and when she saw him raised from the dead. She would then fully understand that Jesus was talking of his future death and resurrection in the Holy City of Jerusalem - which is our peace - the forgiveness of sins.

**Jesus Must Be In His Father's House** so that doing the business of his house we may be with him forever in that house! As he says in those familiar words of John 14:1-4, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Jesus is that way. By his road of death and resurrection we travel down the same road to die and rise with our Savior! Without the way there is no going! That was Jesus' business in his Father's house for his whole life, and now, by faith in him, the way to the place prepared for us!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott