

Luke 2:40-52

Do you suppose that Jesus was taken out back to the woodshed when they returned home from Jerusalem? The Book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus experienced every type of suffering that we experience, so perhaps He received a whipping when they got home. After all, His mother was quite upset when they finally found Jesus in the temple. But Hebrews also tells us that Jesus suffered without sinning even once. He was not disobedient when He was twelve years old. His mother and Joseph should have known exactly where to look for Him when it was time to leave. It was not His fault; it was theirs.

And the same is true today. People everywhere blame God for their troubles. Yet these same people would be able to deal with their troubles and live in peace and joy if they would only do what Mary and Joseph finally did in the end--search for Jesus in His Father's House.

Mary and Joseph were very frantic; probably panicking the whole time they were looking for Jesus. And so today, people do not handle the problems in their life well at all because they do not know where Jesus is. Little things bother them. Big things upset them. They may put up a good front much of the time, but inside there is no real peace and hope because they are not the kind of people who are found in the Father's House searching for and finding Jesus here.

Mary and Joseph should have known better. Jesus points this out to them: "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's House?" Rather than search among their friends and relatives; rather than scour the city, Mary and Joseph should have known that Jesus would be in the House of God. Isn't that our understanding today? You come here on Sunday mornings because you know that Jesus is here. He's not hovering somehow within these walls. He is found where His Word is purely preached and His Sacraments are rightly given. And so Christians come to church because they know that this is where Jesus must be. And where Jesus is, there is peace and hope, joy and forgiveness. All these blessings are yours by faith because you are here for Jesus, and He is here for you.

Looking at our story in Luke 2, this part about searching for Christ and finding Him in His Father's House appears to be the main point; perhaps even the only point worth preaching on. Yet, there is one little phrase toward the end of the story which is pretty impressive. These words: "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them." Jesus was submissive to Mary His mother, and to Joseph His stepfather. But wouldn't it have been tempting--the Book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was tempted even as a boy--for Jesus to have asserted Himself and told Mary and Joseph, "Hey! I'm God in this family, not either one of you!" But He never said that or even thought of saying it. With Jesus there were no "terrible two's." He was never jealous of His stepbrothers. And when He was a teenager He never rebelled, not even once. And this is amazing. Mary's Child is the eternal Son of God. But within that family God submitted Himself completely to Mary and to her husband Joseph.

What this tells us is that God follows His own rules. He gave us the Fourth Commandment to obey. And when He was in His mother's house, He never said, "I don't need to honor father and mother...they should honor Me!" No, He honored them. He obeyed them. He was submissive to them. And so also He obeyed the Third Commandment. He was found within His Father's House. He did not show up and do crossword puzzles in the pew. He loved the Word of God. He was involved in the listening and reading of that Word.

Why did Jesus obey in all these ways? Not to show us up. Not even to show us how. He did this for you and me because we would not and could not. Jesus was the perfect Son because I'm not. Jesus obeyed father and mother because you don't. Jesus submitted to authority because we like to rebel against it. Jesus went to church faithfully because you and I have a hard time being faithful.

This story in Luke 2 is pretty much the opposite of our story. If we were taken to the big city at the age of twelve, the last place we would be found would be in the House of the Lord day after day. We'd be out living it up having fun. It would never be said of us, "he or she went home with their parents and was submissive to them." As youngsters and as adults, we don't like to submit. We want to be our own boss...our own god.

And so, friends, even at the age of twelve Jesus is your Savior. He submits, He obeys, and He does it for you. He lives a perfect life and not for His own sake, but for your sake, so that you who belong to God by Water and Word, Bread and Wine, are seen by God as perfect sons and daughters. Yes, Christ died for you when He became an adult. But even as a boy He lived for you so that your sinful life is a holy life in the sight of God.

When you children obey your parents this week, it's because Jesus lives in you. He is the one submitting to their authority through you. When you parents bring your children to church with you and give them a love for the Word of God, it's Jesus living a holy life within you. He is the one keeping the Third Commandment in you and through you.

This same Jesus who was submissive as a boy, was also submissive as an adult. He did not resist the soldiers who arrested Him in the Garden. He did not rebel against Pilate's order that He be crucified. He submitted, and again, He did it for you...so that when you resist authority, you can come here to God's House, confess your sin, and hear the word of forgiveness in Christ. So that when you are lax in coming to hear that Word, you can come up to God's altar, receive Christ's body and blood, and hear the words, "This is for you." You, dear sinner, are forgiven. Jesus lived for you and He died for you. In Christ Jesus you have a Savior. Amen.