

“Young Jesus”

Isaiah 7:14-16; Luke 2:41-52; 1st Peter 2:21-24

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01/01/2023

Opening Prayer

If you are anything like me, you aren't a huge fan of “New Year's Resolutions.” We all know the statistics on them, we all know that folks are most likely to drop that resolution in the first two weeks, but at the same time we can't help but think about such things. It is natural, I suppose, when the year turns over to then start looking ahead to the future. Having just finished with Christmas and the Christmas account, the birth of Jesus, the prophecies of His future, it feels like the right time for us to talk about the only transitional scripture on Jesus's life in the Bible. Today we are talking about young Jesus, with an eye to the future. In many ways today's focus fits with where we are at in the year, as we prepare to embark into 2023.

Luke 2:41-52 is the only time we read in scripture about Jesus between His birth and when He takes up His ministry. We don't often think about this, but the majority of the life of Christ is unwritten in scripture. There is no talk about Jesus as a five-year-old, no mention of His first job, no discussion about if He knew His earthly grandparents or aunts and uncles or anything else. Those 30 odd years are unknown to us, but we can make at least a few good guesses, some of which you have heard before if you have been worshipping with us. We mentioned in December that Joseph, His earthly dad (although not by blood obviously), almost certainly had passed by the time Jesus took up His ministry. We also can ascertain that Jesus learned to be a carpenter from His earthly father, and that His brothers, sisters, and mother still lived in Nazareth when He started preaching. Mark 6:3 reads “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him.” From that same verse, where Jesus is being accused by people in His hometown, we shouldn't overlook that Jesus had a bunch of siblings. He has four siblings that are mentioned, and an unknown number of sisters as well. The James and Judas who are mentioned would go on to be early church leaders, and it is they that would write the books of James and Jude in the New Testament. That's pretty much it Beloved. The heart of all we know about the Son of God comes after His

birth and His upbringing. The majority we know, by design of the Lord Himself, is His ministry. He teaches, preaches, performs miracles, dies on the cross, and rises again, and that is what we know and care most about. Rightfully so, that is what the Lord chose to tell us through scripture in any detail. But Luke 2:41-52 does give us the one important transition we need to understand Jesus well. It connects His birth to His ministry, and it does so with the glorious truth that Jesus was always God in human flesh.

This account at the end of Luke 2 recalls how Jesus would travel with His parents to Jerusalem every year for Passover. When He is twelve, they traveled there as per usual, but when it came time for them to return, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph don't notice at first, thinking that He must be in their large caravan with relatives or friends. With the number of siblings mentioned in Mark 6, they were probably occupied with younger children. It can be speculated too, as is often the case even today, that they likely traveled with grandparents and aunts and uncles and the like who would have helped to keep an eye on the adolescent Jesus. Scripture is pretty clear that Jesus was always sinless, so it is fair to wonder just how much Mary and Joseph would have had to worry about their oldest kid. Thinking about this in our context, those of you who had multiple kids in the home can probably attest to the freedoms (and responsibilities) you gave your oldest. Joseph and Mary, we can probably surmise, trusted young Jesus. Yet, when the time for them to travel back home from Jerusalem comes, Jesus does something totally out of character and stays behind in the temple.

At first they assume Jesus must be amongst them somewhere. But, after a day of searching the caravan, they head back to Jerusalem. Doing what any good parent would do, they tear the place apart and look for their child for three days. Perhaps a few of you know what it is like to lose track of your kid for a little while. Many parents have been in that spot. A kid rides their bike a few blocks away without telling their folks, a toddler wanders off in a store, a teenager stays out with their friends later than they said they would, etc. All of those situations and more can fill a parent with dread, exacerbated when a child isn't immediately found. Frantically looking for Jesus, worried sick as we would all understand, they finally find Him in the temple, conversing with the religious teachers. To the surprise of everyone there, Jesus is speaking in a way that is far from that of an average twelve-year-old.

“Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.” The way Jesus listens and answers questions and asks His own sets Him apart from everyone else. His answers and His understanding are far above that which was expected. For us today, we recognize immediately that it makes sense that God in human flesh would act in such a way. Of course, God Himself would be well versed in all things, especially that which regards Himself. For them, they would have been shocked by a twelve-year-old speaking above their heads. Mary and Joseph are astonished when they finally find Jesus. “‘Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.’ And He said to them, ‘Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?’” (Some translations read: “Had to be about My Father’s business?”) From there, scripture tells us that they didn’t understand what Jesus was talking about, and then Jesus continued in subjection them, increasing in wisdom and stature.

There are several things that we learn about Jesus in these final few verses. The first and foremost is that He already is well aware of who He is. It is very clear throughout scripture that Jesus is sinless, and it is very clear that He is fully God. We read Isaiah 7:14-16 as an example of this. We know verse fourteen well, it is where the prophecy of Jesus being born of a virgin comes from. The following two verses though, speak to Jesus as a child. “He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.” Curds and honey were toddler food, simple things that kids could eat. Curds are similar in texture and creation to cottage cheese, and honey needs no introduction. The implication is that the promised Messiah would know right from wrong straight away. Any of you who have children can attest that by the young ages of 2-3 a kid often knows if they are doing right or wrong. Jesus, according to the prophecy in Isaiah, knew right from wrong and chose to refuse evil immediately. His words to Mary and Joseph, “Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” also show that Jesus was always well aware of who He was. We also can see that God Himself, chose to be in subjection to His earthly parents. (If even Jesus Himself respected and listened to His parents, we should too!) Finally, the curious statement in verse 52 that He “kept increasing and wisdom and stature” tells us that Jesus while God in human flesh, went through the growing process that all of us do. Ultimately, it is very clear that Jesus is fully Lord right from the start. He has Godly traits like

sinlessness to go along with being born of a virgin. His wisdom is off the charts, as we would expect. On the other hand, it is very clear that Jesus grew up just as all of us do. He followed His parents' instructions, He was raised, He grew up, etc. This is all done by design Beloved, both as a clear indication of who He is, and also as a clear example of how we are called to act. Beloved, we are to be about our Father's business too.

Listen again to the words of 1st Peter 2:21-24: "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live in righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." In all things, Jesus provided us with the perfect example to follow. His purpose was to do what He had come to do. Jesus's ultimate ministry was far greater than just living a normal life, He was incarnated to be the payment for our sins. Your purpose in life too, is much greater than what the world would have you think. In thinking about the New Year and plans for the future, Beloved please recognize that God didn't create you to just exist. There is so much more! Whether you are a plumber or a paramedic or a student or an office worker, God has great plans for you. Your Holy work with your coworkers is eternally important. Your service here in the church is eternally important. The way you raise your children or interact with others or the way you pray is eternally important. Keeping that in mind and being intentional about it is how you live according to your Father's purpose. Jesus came to us, lived a life of sinlessness, died in our place, and rose again so that we might have eternal life and so that we might begin it here and now! The peace you have, the purpose in life that you have, the hope that you hold, those things begin now Beloved. The way you rest in those truths is by being about your Father's business. Engage with scripture. Pray often. Join us here in worship and in giving of the gifts God has given you to benefit the kingdom. Rest in the joy that you are made and called with a purpose, to share the gift given to you to others.

This brings us to one last important point of consideration this morning Beloved. There may be some of you who have never taken that leap into following Christ. Maybe you have been on the fence for some time, or maybe you haven't taken it really seriously. Maybe you haven't believed, but the Lord has been working on

your heart. There is no better time to follow Christ than right now. You can receive peace and purpose and eternal life right now if you will follow Him. It is a process, to learn and grow and be about His business consistently, but it starts with that first step. (Think about it like getting into shape. The most important workout is the first one, and then it is about staying consistent after that.) On a similar note, maybe there are a few of you here this morning who have been coasting in your walk with Christ lately. Maybe you have gotten out of some of those good habits that you know are beneficial. You haven't spent much time intentionally with the Lord lately, and you feel like you are on cruise control. Now is the perfect time for you too to be reinvigorated and to take back up that joyful calling God has given you. You are well loved, cared for, prayed for, and rejoiced over by your Heavenly Father. (Much again, if you were in shape but have lapsed a bit, it is that first workout back that is hardest. Staying consistent is always the name of the game afterwards.) For all of us, as we transition into the New Year, I pray that we would learn a thing or two from young Jesus. Lets be about our Father's business together in 2023, remembering that hope, peace, purpose, and eternal life that has been freely given by His hand. Lets pray.

Closing Prayer