

Sunday, December 26, 2026
First Sunday of Christmas

And they grew in stature and wisdom. People of the truth are to grow in wisdom and stature. The light shines in the darkness and we are called to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. As Samuel did, as our Lord did, we are called into the upward journey of walking in the light. We are to grow and mature.

Twelve years later, after His birth in Bethlehem – Scripture is silent about Jesus most of childhood – Jesus, with His parents, are in Jerusalem. There are several points here that would help us to understand the story much better. The age of twelve is an awkward age. No longer a boy, but almost a man. When traveling to Jerusalem, as was the custom of the faithful, groups would travel together. For the most part, they walked. Pack animals might carry necessities, but they walked. It was perhaps a two or three day walk from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

Why were so many people traveling together to Jerusalem? Ancient Judaism required going to the temple for worship. Living close enough to Jerusalem gave Jesus' earthly family the opportunity to go to the temple each year. They had probably been doing this at least once every year since Jesus' birth. The traditional home of Anna, the mother of Mary, is about a football field's length from the temple mount, so there was double the reason for regular visits.

Psalms 42 and 43 were written at the time when Israel and Judah were two kingdoms. The king of Israel forbade his subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship and make sacrifices. For the truly faithful, this was akin to being forced to sin, for the faithful could not do what the Lord asked of them and they lamented. "As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after Thee." The writer was lamenting his inability to travel to Jerusalem to fulfill God's commands. To this day, many chapels, even Synagogues have a statue or carving of a deer over the doorway indicating what a privilege it is to come and worship the Lord. Keep that in mind, that being able to worship the Lord is indeed a privilege granted through grace.

Jesus and His earthly family travel to Jerusalem. When traveling in large groups, the women with children often traveled in a group in front of the men (never put the men in front because without children and being men, they probably would cover the ground much quicker). Boys who were at Bar Mitzvah age could travel with either the women or the men. Some wandered back and forth. This is an important point for our story.

Joseph and Mary had traveled a day's journey in the caravan. When they met up in the evening, Jesus was nowhere to be found. Mary thought Jesus was with Joseph and Joseph thought Jesus was with Mary. They were not un-attentive parents, they just did what most parents do in trusting that things would be the way they anticipated. Do we not all do that from time to time? Being a day's journey with a crowd, it did not take them long to hurry back to Jerusalem and there they went.

Looking all over Jerusalem, after three days, they found Jesus in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. How glorious it would have been to be sitting there with Him! As a teacher, there is nothing more glorious than having an attentive and bright student. How much more so the One through whom and for whom all things were created coming and sitting, asking all the right questions.

Did Jesus sin with what He did? No! He had the freedom to wander, as many children will do. We bump into the reality of the expectation of the parents. The parents expected Jesus to be with them. In a festive mood from all of the festivities, the large groups meandered together and particular attention was usually not required, especially for one as old as Jesus at

that time. How often do we live with our own unexpressed expectations? Jesus was not defying His parents. Nor did He seek to upset them. He was about greater business. He was with the leaders of the faith in the heart of the city built upon the reality of God's revelation to humanity. He was the One who came to bring all things together according to the promises made long ago through the prophecy of Scripture.

Throughout Scripture, the one thing we see clearly and consistently is that those who encountered Jesus did not consider Him trivial, nor inconsequential. Later, when confronted by the Scribes and Pharisees, they considered Him as one who was to be taken seriously. There is great importance in this. We know that He said that He and the Father are one. Now, in Hinduism, no one would give rise to this, but amongst the Jews, having been trained in their thinking by God, such a thing was preposterous – unless it were true. In fact, His stating that He was God in the flesh as the very reason He was crucified. Either this is true, or else it is not. There is no middle ground. If He is God, then to come to God is to come to Him. The world muddles the simplicity of this, but we do well to let this be one of the fundamental places of understanding for our faith, for without it, there is no point in being here, or even considering ourselves Christian.

Jesus is God in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us. Of course the teachers were amazed at the questions and answers of Jesus, even if He was only twelve. God in the flesh was sitting with them. We can only imagine the kinds of questions He was asking and the answers He was giving. Remember that Jesus told us that He did not come to do away with the law, but to fulfill it. He did not come introducing any new morality, but came to make the way to the true morality of God possible. He came to shatter the games that sinners play with one another in order to prepare the way of everlasting life. He did not slowly awaken to the reality of being God, He knew, more than any human in this age knows, who He was and is.

The world crashed in. The world does that. We can spend time with the Lord and then the world crashes in. "Child, you caused us great anxiety!" Joseph and Mary knew who He was and is. Jesus would later tell His disciples, "Be anxious for nothing." Nothing would happen to Jesus before His time. Trust that the One who has the very hairs on your head numbered knows all that is needed, even before you ask. All of the things that bring anxiety to our door will continue until the end of the age. Why do you worry so? Be prudent, yes, but do not worry. Anxiety brings about nothing, nor does it change the circumstances.

Jesus came for the Father's business. This is serious business indeed. Were Joseph of Aramathea, Nicodemus, and Gamiliel amongst those who encountered Jesus that day? Perhaps. When Jesus entered into His public ministry, there were those who already encountered Him. God has a way of having one thing lead to another. Our Lord is very intentional and will see to it that all things work together according to His purpose. We hear this story and are reminded that our Lord lived a human life and understands what it is like to be human, with all of its challenges and the daily choices that we need to make. Like the rest of us, Jesus' earthly parents saw a 12 year old and did not understand when He told them that He was about His Father's business. Mary did ponder these things in her heart.

We are not only called to follow Jesus, but to become like Him. He leads the way. We too are to increase in wisdom as the years progress. We are to grow in divine and human favor as we live the call to be faithful even as our Savior was and is faithful. The journey is before us all. Will you be found about the Father's business? I pray so! Come. Let us journey through the celebration that salvation has come and leads the way. Amen.