

The First Sunday after the Epiphany of our Lord
St. Luke 2:41-52
January 7th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

His Parents Went Every Year to Jerusalem

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“And His parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the Boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem: and His parents knew it not; but supposing Him to be in the company, they went a day’s journey; and they sought for Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: and when they found Him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for Him.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who, when a Child, wast seated in the Temple in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, so rule us, we beseech Thee, by Thy Holy Spirit that, following Thy example, we may love the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thine honor dwelleth, diligently seek the same, hearing Thy Word with gladness, and faithfully keeping it to the saving of our souls; O Thou, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, ever, One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, last Sunday, the Sunday within the Octave of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, we heard how our Lord’s parents first took Him to the temple to present Him as their firstborn Son, and complete the purification rite for the Blessed Virgin Mary. The next day, on our society’s new year and the Festival of the Circumcision and Name of + Jesus, we heard that our Lord’s parents also fulfilled the rite of circumcision on the eighth day of His life, as was given to Abraham His ancestor. On that day He also received the Name of + Jesus, the Name first given to Him by the angel Gabriel nine months before His birth to the Blessed Virgin, and also the Name told to His earthly guardian, St. Joseph, in a dream. He was given the Name which tells us what He came to do, He came to be our Savior.

From these two events we see that our Lord’s parents were devout and righteous parents. They did what the Law of Moses required. They circumcised our Lord + Jesus on the eighth day according to the Law. They presented our Lord and purified St. Mary on the fortieth day, according to the Law of Moses, and offered the required sacrifices. In this environment was our Lord and Savior raised. Last Sunday’s Gospel reading ending with the Evangelist St. Luke telling us that the Child grew, and waxed strong, and was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. This is because His parents were devout and righteous and raised their Son in the Jewish faith as it had been handed to them. They put the Word of God in their Son’s hands, so that He could grow in wisdom of that Word.

Today, St. Luke tells us something else about our Lord’s parents. It was their custom to go every

year up to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. Mark this well! There were three feasts that the men of Israel were required to present themselves first before the Tabernacle of Meeting, and when it was built before the temple of the Lord God in Jerusalem. Those three feasts were Passover, as it says in this Gospel reading; The feast of Pentecost, which happened fifty days later, the feast of the firstfruits of the harvest; and the feast of booths, or tabernacles, the feast that celebrated the completion of the harvest—a harvest festival. Make note that only the men were required to go to these feasts. The women and children were allowed to remain home and continue to take care of the things necessary for the home.

St. Luke the Evangelist tells us however, that both our Lord's parents were accustomed to go to the feast of Passover. This was not uncommon. We see this when His parents sought Him among their kinsmen. Whole families would travel together in pilgrimage to share the burden of the trip, and provide company and protection along the way. That both of His parents were in the practice of going to Jerusalem every year, shows us that He indeed did have devout and righteous parents. It shows us that they intended to raise their Son in the Jewish faith; that they would raise Him according to the Law of Moses, so that He would learn it and continue to live in it.

This is no different than the loving Christian parent which faithfully raises their children in the Christian faith by first bringing them to Holy Baptism after they are first born, and then bringing them to the Church to hear the Word of God, to learn the Liturgy, and learn to sit and hear a sermon. The Christian parent would also bring their children to instruction in the catechism so that they might fully learn it and then their children would be received at this altar to join all those who believe and are baptized in the reception of our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine. A loving Christian parent does not neglect to bring their children to the Lord's house. And when they are grown, they also continue to encourage them to remain faithful in their attendance at the Lord's house and continue to receive the gifts of the Lord God.

St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary brought the Lord + Jesus to a priest to be circumcised. They brought Him to a priest so that He might be declared the Firstborn Son, and that St. Mary might be purified according to the Law of Moses. And they brought Him with them every year to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover, so that they might eat the Passover meal with their fellow devout and righteous Jewish friends and family. In other words, they did the outward works that everybody can see and give testimony. But as St. Luke recorded last Sunday at the end of that Gospel, and as he says at the end of today's Gospel, that our Lord advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men, they did not just do the outward works for show. Our Lord + Jesus is able to grow in wisdom and in God and man's favor, because their faith was not a faith that only came out when they were in view of their fellowman. The Law of Moses and the teachings contained in holy Scripture were lived in their home.

This is also what makes for good Christian parents. They do not just live their faith in the Christ whenever they come to Church. Their faith is not reserved for Sunday mornings. In their home that which they receive and hear on Sunday mornings is alive and well in the home. They pray and read and study God's Word. They sing hymns and chant the psalter. The Law of God is taught and expected to be followed by everyone in the family, and when it is broken both repentance is encouraged, and forgiveness given to those who are sorry for their sins and with the Holy Ghost's assistance desire to amend their sinful lives. In other words, every moment of the Christian family's existence is surrounded by the Word of the Lord God. They place their faith in His graciousness every moment of the day. They learn to ask forgiveness when they fail, and learn to look to the cross of the Lord + Jesus as the testimony to their redemption and forgiveness. And they do not fail to come to the Lord's house and receive the means which seals this gift of forgiveness.

And like the Lord + Jesus Who had devout and righteous parents, and Who grew in wisdom and

stature, and in favor with God and men, the children of Christian parents will also be raised in the Christian faith and will not depart from it when they are grown. A Christian child who has been raised in a Christian home and has been faithfully taught to not only hear the Word of the Lord God, but has also been taught to learn it—the Child who has been faithfully taught to learn and memorize the Small Catechism—will pleasantly amaze his pastor at the wisdom and understanding that this child possesses. Because a faithful pastor knows that such training come only partly from what the child has heard in the Church. This child has been well catechized by his parents. Just as the Lord + Jesus amazed the teachers in the temple, who were amazed at the questions He asked and the answers He gave.

For we must ever, like our Lord + Jesus, be in our Father's house. We must hear His Word and receive His gifts, and teach our children to do the same. In doing so do we not only continue to strengthen the Church, but we give our offspring the tools they need to face this world which hates the Church and those in it. We give them the faith which teaches them that this world will not provide them with the answers they seek, but will only lead them down a dark and lonely path. For the Light of the world that leads us and our children to Heaven is found in the Church. It is found in the means of grace. Our Lord + Jesus Who grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men, grew up to offer His life as a ransom for ours, and win for us eternal life and salvation with Him. May we remain faithful unto death, so that we too may receive the crown of eternal life. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!