

Childhood of Jesus – *“This Child Is Your Savior.”*
St. Luke 2:21, 22-38, St. Matthew 2:1-12, 13-23, St. Luke 2:41-52
January 6/7, 2018 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

+ + +

In Christ Jesus, who was focused at every moment of His earthly life on winning your salvation, dear fellow redeemed:

The texts you have heard today are all we know about the life of Jesus from when He was eight days old until He traveled with Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem when He was twelve years old. There are three major things we notice about Jesus’ life during this time period:

- I. Jesus was not exempt from the Law.
- II. He did not use His divine powers as a Child.
- III. Though He looked like anyone else His age, He was recognized and worshipped as the Messiah.

I. At eight days old, Jesus was circumcised according to God’s command to Abraham, a command which applied to all of Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 17). Not only was this the first time Jesus shed blood, but His circumcision also bound Him to keep the Law of God delivered to the people through Moses. This meant that God was now required to keep His own Law. Jesus would later explain to the people, *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished”* (Mt. 5:17-18).

Then at forty days old, Jesus was taken by His parents to the temple in Jerusalem to be presented to the LORD. This was required by God of all firstborn sons dating back to the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. At that time, God passed over and spared the firstborn sons of the Israelites but killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. From that point on, every Israelite firstborn was “consecrated” or “called holy” to the LORD (Ex. 13:2).

Jesus did not act above the Law. He subjected Himself to it, and He fulfilled it completely.

II. Besides committing Himself to the Law, Jesus also committed Himself to a State of Humiliation in which He did not make full use of His divine powers. Notice that when His life was threatened by the jealous Herod, Jesus did not create a force field around the house to keep the soldiers from entering. Nor did He whisk His family away to Egypt by miraculous means. An angel told Joseph to get Mary and Jesus to safety. The Son of God relied on a humble craftsman to save Him from the king’s rage.

In our texts for today, Jesus would have been doing what normal babies do. He cooed and giggled. He cried when He was hungry or needed His diaper changed. And as He grew, He stumbled about on toddler legs. He played with other children. He studied and learned from parents and teachers. We might think that because Jesus is God, He never would have lost a race, using super speed to leave everyone behind. Or maybe the other kids resented Him because He answered every question before the teacher could even finish asking it. But those

things did not happen. He did not use His divine powers to show off. He “*manifested His glory*” with miracles and signs only when the time had come to reveal Himself as the Christ at the start of His public ministry (Jn. 2:11).

Until then, Jesus lived an ordinary, humble life, but with the unique distinction of never sinning. All the way through His youth, His teenaged years, His twenties, and into His thirties, Jesus did not sin in His actions, words, or thoughts. The devil certainly tempted Him to sin all along the way, but He remained holy. The author to the Hebrews writes, “*in every respect [He] has been tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (4:15). The evangelist Luke sums up the righteous childhood of Jesus by declaring, “*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man*” (Lk. 2:52).

III. Even though Jesus did not look different than other children His age, He was recognized as the Messiah, the Savior of the nations. This started even when Jesus was in Mary’s womb. Elizabeth said to Mary, “[*W*]hy is this granted to me that the mother of *my Lord* should come to me?” (Lk. 1:43). Then the shepherds worshipped Jesus the night of His birth, while He rested in the poor bed of a manger.

Later on, Simeon recognized the One carried into the temple by Joseph and Mary as the coming Messiah. He worshipped this Baby as the salvation of the Jews and the Gentiles. Then aged Anna came over and worshipped the Child also. After this, Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem for some time, having found a house to live in. There, Jesus was visited by the wise men from the East who also fell down to worship Him and gave Him gifts.

At face value, this all seems very odd. How could these people worship a baby Boy who showed no obvious signs of being the Son of God? The Apostle Paul explains, “*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned*” (1Cor. 2:14). Those who worshipped Jesus were not convinced by what they saw; they were led to believe in and confess Jesus as Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convinced them that what was prophesied in the Scriptures about the coming Messiah had now been fulfilled.

But why did this all happen? Why did Jesus put Himself under the Law? Why did He refrain from full use of His powers? Why did He come in such humility?

Jesus did not gain anything for Himself by keeping the Law. He could not become more righteous than He already was. He kept the Law for you and me and all sinners. He needed to do this because no human being has lived a spotless life. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). In love, “*God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons*” (Gal. 4:4-5). God now regards you as His sons, holy and righteous, because you do not trust in your own efforts and goodness, but totally in the perfect work of Jesus.

Jesus did not make full use of His divine powers, because He came to suffer for you. He came to be chased away from His homeland by a wicked king, to be accused of crimes He never committed, to be beaten by Jews and Gentiles alike, and to be executed by crucifixion. The Son

of God *“made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:7-8).*

His perfect life and atoning death were offered up to God as the sacrifice for you. Jesus came in such a lowly way to save you. He came to redeem you from the sins of your youth, from the terrors and fears you have endured at the hands of others, from all the terrible trials and difficulties you experience in this imperfect world. As Simeon confessed, He came to be your peace, your salvation, your light, and your glory. Every aspect of His holy life from His conception onward was dedicated to purifying your sinful life, so that you would finally be freed from sword and sorrow and would join Him, not in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Egypt, or Nazareth, but in heaven above.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love;
For that Child, so dear and gentle,
Is our Lord in heav’n above;
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.
(*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary #139, v. 4*)

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

+ + +