

The First Sunday after Epiphany  
St. Luke 2:41-52: "Questions Raised; Questions Answered"  
January 9/10, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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O Lord Jesus Christ, who sat lowly in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions: Give unto Your servants that humility of heart, and willingness to learn, without which no man can find wisdom; to the glory of Your holy name. Amen. (*Parish Prayers*, ed. Frank Colquhoun, p. 44)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is taken from the second chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

Now [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing Him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for Him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for Him. / After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. And when His parents saw Him, they were astonished. And His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us so? Behold, Your father and I have been searching for You in great distress." / And He said to them, "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that He spoke to them. / And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And His mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, who was manifested as the Son of God by His holy words and deeds, dear fellow redeemed:

If you have ever been left behind somewhere accidentally, you probably remember the feeling. If you have ever lost track of a child, you definitely remember the feeling. First looking where you expect to find him, then widening the search, then becoming more frantic until your child is finally located. We can imagine how Mary and Joseph were feeling when Jesus was not where they expected Him to be. How would small-town Jesus do by Himself in big-city Jerusalem?

While they were searching frantically for Jesus, He was not troubled in the least. He was twelve years old, the age of a seventh grader. This is a time of transition when a child begins to think and act more independently. It is clear that Joseph and Mary allowed Jesus some independence, since they were not concerned to set off for home without knowing exactly where He was. But Jesus was not with the travel group; He was in the temple.

He was hardly noticed as He made His way up the temple steps. Nobody in the temple knew the significance of this Boy. They did not perceive that He was God in the flesh. In Old Testament times, God entered His temple in a cloud of fire. Now He came in humility, His eternal glory hidden, *“the whole fullness of deity”* dwelling in His twelve-year-old body (Col. 2:9).

If you have ever seen the show, *“Undercover Boss,”* that is something like the irony of this moment. Jesus quietly took His seat before the temple teachers. They were some of the best and brightest teachers of the Law. But these experts had no idea that the LORD Himself was in their midst. They soon learned that there was something different about this Boy. He showed a depth of understanding they were not used to hearing from students of this age or perhaps any age.

Jesus respectfully asked them questions, and they responded with some questions of their own. *“[A]ll who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.”* They wondered where this Boy got His remarkable knowledge. They probably wanted to know His background: *“What did you say Your name was? Where are You from? You say the family trade is carpentry?”* It was astonishing that Jesus could come from such humble circumstances and display such understanding.

Jesus sat among the teachers for three days. During that time, Mary and Joseph were retracing their steps to Jerusalem before they eventually found Jesus in the temple. Now His mother had a question for Him: *“Son, why have You treated us so?”* We can certainly understand the question. If your child decided to spend a couple days at a friend’s house without telling you, you would probably use more pointed words than Mary when you finally found him or her.

But Jesus did not hang His head in shame. He replied calmly with two questions of His own: *“Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father’s house?”* These are the first words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. They show that even at age twelve, He was focused on the work He had come to do. He had to be in His Father’s house. He was there to do His Father’s bidding.

The season of Epiphany is about the revealing of Jesus as God’s Son. That’s what *“epiphany”* means: a revealing or a manifesting. We heard last weekend how Jesus was revealed as the Messiah to the wise men. Next weekend, we will hear how He manifested His divine power by changing water into wine. We know these accounts well, but we cannot fully understand the mystery of God becoming Man. Nor do we fully appreciate what it means for life in this world.

When we are faced with the questions and concerns of the present, like questions about our health, our government, and our society, it is easy to forget that God has become one with us. Unbelievers do not know this. They do not know the Christ and what He has done. It’s no wonder they become so invested in scientific endeavors, political movements, and power plays. These worldly initiatives are their religion, and government officials and other prominent people are their gods.

We need to resist those currents. We do not stand on the eroding sand of human opinions. We stand on the solid rock of Jesus and His Word. The world of men thought it knew what power was. The world thought it was wise. But all of that was exposed as flimsiness and foolishness

when the Creator God entered His world as a Man. We cannot make ourselves God, but God made Himself Man.

Who can stand against this God? He said about Himself, *"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand"* (Deu. 32:39). The so-called powerful people of the world would be "shaking in their boots" if they realized what they were up against. *"[T]he nations rage and the peoples plot in vain,"* says the psalmist; they try to take the glory that belongs to God alone. But *"He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision"* (Psa. 2:1-6). God's Son rules as King over heaven and earth.

But where is the evidence of His rule? Some can't understand why He allowed the current president to be elected. Others can't understand why He is letting the new president take office. In all the chaos of today, it can seem like Jesus is missing or that He really isn't powerful. Can't He see our troubles? Can't He see that we are suffering? We start to sound like Mary: "Lord, why have You treated us so? Behold, we have been searching for You in great distress."

All these anxious cares show that we have our minds set on earthly things and not on *"things that are above"* (Col. 3:2). Have we forgotten what God's Son has done? Have we forgotten that He performed countless miracles—even raising people from the dead—while living a perfectly pure life on earth? Have we forgotten that He accepted the punishment for all sin and died on the cross in our place? Have we forgotten that He rose again from the dead just as He predicted? Have we forgotten that our future is inseparably tied to His because we have been buried and raised with Him in Baptism?

When we cry out: "We have been searching for You in great distress!" He says, *"Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"* In other words He says, "You are guilty of looking for Me in the wrong places and not where I have told you to look." If we think we will find Him in a perfect government on earth or in perfect success or in a life of constant pleasure and happiness, we will not find Him. He will remain hidden from us.

But if we look for Him in His Holy Word and His Holy Sacraments, we will find Him. We will find Him ready to forgive our sins, help us in our afflictions, comfort us in our sorrows, and strengthen us in our trials. Through the means of grace, Jesus is constantly doing the work His Father sent Him to do, the work of bringing us His blessings.

God sent His Son into the world to save the world. That doesn't mean His Son came to reform the world or improve it or make everything fair and peaceful for everyone who lives on it. God sent His Son to save sinners from the eternal punishment they deserve. By His innocent suffering and death, Jesus did the work to redeem all people. And now He fights to keep believers in the faith and bring others to faith.

Our King is not hiding or missing. He is seated at the right hand of the Father ruling over all things. Nothing is hidden from His view and nothing is beyond His power. He is able to put all our questions to rest, either by answering them or by teaching us to live without the answers. Nothing is hidden from Him, but some things are hidden from us. We do not know what our future holds. We might want to know, but we don't need to know.

What we do need to know is that no matter what changes around us, His mercy and love toward us will not change. That gives us the confidence to go about our daily tasks with joy and diligence. We are not searching in anguish for some earthly power to save us and make our lives better. Jesus is our Lord who won the victory over sin, death, and devil. And we are His people.

As His people, we abide by His Word and serve according to His direction. We love the family and friends He has given us. We go about our work honestly and faithfully. We care about the needs of our neighbor. Our good efforts may go unnoticed. They may be hidden from most everyone and lost to history. But we are not in it for our glory.

Our eternal glory is already secure in Christ. He fulfilled God's Holy Law for us, including perfect obedience to His parents and all other authorities. He submitted Himself to the temple teachers and to His imperfect parents, so that we could stand righteous before God.

We have sinned in many ways against our parents, teachers, and other authorities, such as the government officials the Lord in His wisdom has established. But whatever our Fourth Commandment sins may be, Jesus atoned for every single one by His death. And He applies the perfect keeping of the Law to all who trust in Him.

We have many questions about what may happen to us here on earth. But we have no questions about what God has given us in Christ. All the questions that really matter—the questions about our eternal future—are answered by the gracious work of Jesus to save us.

*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.*

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