

## Luke 2:41-52

A lot of territory has been covered between the Gospel from Christmas Day and our text for this morning. To be more specific, **twelve years** have passed. In our text for today, Jesus is no longer the **Babe** of Bethlehem. He is twelve years old, and He's going with His parents to the **Temple** in Jerusalem. That's a rather difficult adjustment for us to make, especially in such a **short** amount of time. After all, we've spent such a **long** time - the whole Advent Season - just preparing for the **arrival** of the Christ Child, that we'd like to take some time to **savor** the peace and the joy that His birth brings to us. But all of a sudden, Jesus is no longer a **child**. In a way that reminds me of the parents who say, "Yes, our daughter is 6 years old now - going on 12 - or 12 years old, going on 18!" Childhood needs to be thoroughly **enjoyed** and **savored** while it's there, because it has the tendency to **slip away** on us. In most cases, adulthood arrives **faster** than we had hoped it would.

But of course all children must **grow up**, and in that respect, Jesus was no exception. In our text He had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of the **Passover**. This festival was one of **three**, which all male Jews of mature age were **required** to attend. The other two were the Festival of **Pentecost**, the Festival of **Tabernacles**. Upon reaching the age of 12, Jesus became a "bar mitzvah" - a son of the covenant - and He took up His responsibilities as a mature male - **one** of which was attending those **festivals**. It wasn't always **easy** to make those journeys from Nazareth to Jerusalem three times a year. The carpenter shop would have to be closed, and additional expenses would be incurred for food and lodging during the journey - not to mention everything which would be spent during the seven days of the festival itself. But, people always seem to find a way to **do** those things which they feel are **important**, and Joseph was no exception. He was convinced that these trips were extremely important for himself **and** for his family, so he set aside the time and the money which were necessary to make the journeys a reality.

This was a fine **example** to set for **Jesus**, in spite of the fact that He as the Son of **God** really didn't **need** an example to follow. It becomes very clear later on in our text that Jesus **already knew** what was **important** in terms of religion. I'm sure Jesus would have known what was right and wrong even **without** a God-fearing mother and step-father, but the example in our text is not only there for **Jesus** - it's there for **us**. You see, we are all **sinful** human beings. Sinful human beings have sinful human **children**, and sinful human children **learn** primarily by **example**. I'm sure Joseph could have found **other** things to do rather than go to

Jerusalem, and he probably could have **rationalized** many of them too. Nevertheless, we find him, and Mary, and Jesus, going **as a family** to worship their God.

The **difficulty** in our text arose when the seven days of the festival had **ended**, and the time had arrived to return **home** again to Nazareth. **Jesus** stayed **behind**! Now, Mary and Joseph didn't even **realize** that Jesus was **missing** until **evening** came. That almost sounds like it could have been the basis for the Home Alone movies, doesn't it! We might even wonder what kind of parents Mary and Joseph could have been, when they didn't even **miss** their child for **a whole day**. But actually, there's a very simple explanation for what happened. In those days the women and children traveled in the **front** of the caravan, while the **men** followed along **behind**. Since Jesus was right at that "in-between" age, Joseph probably figured that Jesus was up in front with **Mary**, and she thought that He was in **back** with **Joseph**. At any rate, when they discovered that He was **not** with **either** of them, **TheSearch For Jesus** began.

Since Jesus wasn't among **any** of their relatives, Mary and Joseph assumed that He must have stayed behind in **Jerusalem**. But **where**? All in all, it took **three days** before they **found** Him - one day as they **left** the city, another day to **return**, and a **third** day was spent scouring the **city** in their **Search For Jesus**. Actually, Mary and Joseph could have saved themselves a day by going **directly** to the Temple. They should have **known** that was where Jesus would be. He had just spent seven days worshipping God with them - and then spent an **additional** three days **beyond** what was **required** - learning **and** worshipping. That's an excellent example for **us** to follow. Jesus didn't stop with as **little** worship as He could **get by** with. You wouldn't have heard **Jesus** saying, "I go to church **almost every week**. I don't think God will mind if I take a week **off** once in a while!" Taking time **away** from His heavenly Father was **not** a part of Jesus' way of thinking. Rather, being **close** to His heavenly Father, and doing that Father's **work** was **more important** to Him than anyone or anything. And that's exactly what God would like to see in **us**, as He **tells** us in the First Commandment.

Parents, do you know where **your** children are - right **now**? They should be sitting with **you**, learning from **your example** how to **conduct** themselves in a **worship** service. They should be learning how to sit **quietly**, how to **meditate**, how to participate in the **liturgy**, how to **sing**, and how to **pray** - all by watching **you**. Family **worship** begins at a very early age, and it is very **wrong** of us **not** to use those formative years to **teach** our children how to **worship**.

Many years ago, I read an article in the newspaper which dealt with **value** systems for children. The article began by saying, “We have a nation of young people **without** values.” Why? - because many **parents** are not taking the responsibility of teaching **their** values to their children. Instead, they’re leaving it up to the children’s **peers** - or to **television** - or to the **computer**. I’m sure those are **not** the forces we want to be guiding **our** children’s lives. I remember hearing about parents who said, “We don’t want to **force** our religious ideas and beliefs on our children. So, we have decided to let the children decide for **themselves** what religion they would like to be.” That kind of logic is about as effective as driving to California without a road map. If you head **west**, eventually you may **get** there. But, it would be much **easier** if you knew all along which **roads** to take.

Our children should **never** be presented with the **option** of **worshiping** God, or **not** worshiping God - of **attending** Sunday School, or **not** attending Sunday School - of **praying**, or **not** praying. Children just don’t have the **experience** which is necessary to **make** such important choices. I’d like to offer you a quote from J. Edgar Hoover. He said, “*Why all this **timidity** in the realm of your child’s **spiritual** guidance and growth? Are you going to wait and let him decide what **church** he will go to when he is old enough? Quit **kidding**. You didn’t wait until he was old enough to decide whether or not he wishes to remain **dirty** or be **clean**. Do you wait until he is old enough to decide if he wants to take **medicine** when he is sick?*” Parents who leave the religious morals of their children in the hands of **society** are leaving the door wide open for **Satan**. And you can be **sure** that **he** won’t leave the choice up to anyone **else**!

Again, quite a few years ago I read some **statistics** on the number of children who remain **faithful church members** when they become adults. Even though the numbers **may** have changed somewhat, I’m still pretty confident that they hold true today as well. When both Mom and Dad attended church regularly **with** their children, **72%** of those children did the same as adults. If only **Dad** attended regularly, **55%** of the children remained faithful. If only **Mom** attended regularly, the number dropped drastically to only **15%**. And if **neither** parent attended church, only **6%** of the children followed through on their **own**. That’s rather **shocking**, isn’t it? The statistics speak for themselves. If **we** don’t teach our children what to do **by our example**, then Satan will be happy to step in and fill the void.

As I said before, Jesus had a fine example from His **earthly** mother and

step-father. But He also had the example of His **heavenly** Father. Jesus stayed and worshiped with His parents for the full seven days of the festival, and then He **continued** to worship - for **another** three days! That kind of **all-absorbing** worship obviously has some **benefits** in it. I'm sure that Mary and Joseph **grew** through the experience. It seems that they had temporarily **forgotten** the words of the angel Gabriel, telling them that their child would be **God's** Son, and the **Savior** of the world. I doubt that they **ever** forgot it **again**. Mary and Joseph had also allowed human **worry** to cloud their thinking, and to trouble their minds. They didn't immediately understand the **answer** which Jesus gave them when they finally **found** Him in the Temple. But we're told that Mary treasured all these things in her heart. As she **considered** them and **reconsidered** them again and again, I'm sure the LORD granted her increased **understanding**, because what she was considering was the **Word of God**.

That's also where the answer lies to our **Search For Jesus** - in God's **Word**. People all over the world are **searching** for peace and happiness. Some are **searching** among their relatives and friends - others in drugs and alcohol - still others in their pursuit of **leisure**, or in their persistent hard **work**. But their search will not come to an **end** until they're ready to let **God** speak to them in His **Word**, and until they're willing to make **use** of that Word in their daily **lives**. We are privileged to **have** that Word of God - every day in our homes, and every week in our church. May we truly **treasure** God's Word in our hearts. May we **teach** it to, and **model** it for our **children**. And finally, may we every **day** in every **way**, **use** that precious Word in our lives. May we all **continue** to be truly blessed in our **Search For Jesus**. Amen.