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HIS FATHER'S HOUSE—OUR FATHER'S HOUSE
Luke 2:40-52; Christmas 2C; January 4-5, 2025

Luke's account of Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem when He was twelve years old includes everything in Scripture between the events surrounding His birth until He began His public ministry around the age of 30. (It is also the last we hear about Joseph while still alive.) Luke relates very real human family dynamics and emotions.

After three days [Mary and Joseph] found [Jesus] 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.

Mary and Joseph were "**astonished**" after finding Jesus sitting in the temple listening to the teachers, asking questions, and giving amazing answers showing His understanding of the Bible. Mary told Him how "**distressed**" they were searching for their lost child for three days, wondering if they would ever find Him or whether He was even alive. Mary said to Jesus: "**Son, why have You treated us so? Behold, Your father and I have been searching for You in great distress.**"

Luke's reason for relating this story goes way beyond showing the human side of Jesus growing up in Mary and Joseph's household. After recording the things said about Jesus by angels and shepherds, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Simeon and Anna, Luke gives us the first words of Jesus recorded in Scripture: "**Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?**"

There seemed to be a disagreement over who Jesus' Father was, and whose house Jesus belonged in.

Part One: His Father's House

Jesus was born and raised in the household of Mary and Joseph. Mary was His human mother, and God chose Joseph as His guardian. The boy Jesus was fully committed to keeping the 4th Commandment: **Honor Your father and Your mother.** But Mary's statement to Jesus seems to indicate that they thought He had sinned against them. **"Son, why have You treated us so? Your father and I..."** Jesus had not sinned. The angel had told Mary and Joseph that God was Jesus' Father. Jesus is **Christ, the Lord**, the eternal Son of God in human flesh, God Himself, not some precocious and disobedient 12-year-old boy hanging out in the temple.

In response to Mary's stern, **"Your father and I,"** Jesus replied, **"Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"** Luke notes that they did not understand His answer. Even if Mary and Joseph had lost track of who Jesus' Father was, Jesus had not. In His first-recorded words in Scripture, Jesus confesses God to be His Father.

In the next chapter of Luke – the account of John the Baptist's ministry in preparation for Jesus' public ministry and Jesus' Baptism by John, next week's Gospel Reading for the First Sunday after the Epiphany (3:15-22) – the doctrine of the Holy Trinity will be made more explicit as the God the Father speaks and claims Jesus as His beloved Son and the Holy Spirit rests on Him. Today we hear Jesus make the simple confession that God, not Joseph, is His Father, and that He must be in His Father's house which, at that point in time, was still the temple in Jerusalem.

What was God's Son doing in His Father's house? **"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."** God had promised to be present in the temple to receive sacrifices of offerings and prayers, and it was the place God had commanded His Word be taught to the people. Jesus was in His Father's house about His Father's business. Luke summarizes what Jesus was doing in His Father's house as: **listening to the teachers of God's Law, asking questions, and showing His understanding through His amazing answers.**

God's Word was being taught there in its truth and purity. Jesus was fearing, loving, and trusting in His Father above all things. He was hallowing God's name by holding God's Word sacred and gladly hearing and learning it. He was learning to call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. This would strengthen and keep Jesus firm in faith until He died. If those phrases sound familiar to you, they should. They are from Luther's Small Catechism explanations on commandments and petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

The boy Jesus was in His Father's house doing perfectly what all God's children should do, but don't. We neither keep God's commandments perfectly nor pray like we should, but Jesus does this perfectly, and He does it for us. This qualified Jesus to be our sinless Savior on the cross when He died. The sinless Son of the Father did what we cannot do, and we get credit for what He did when we are baptized and adopted into God's family as His children.

This is St. Paul's point in our Ephesians one Epistle today: **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places... that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ... to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved** (1:3-6) – as in God the Father's declaring at Jesus' baptism: **"You are My beloved Son, with You I am well pleased"** (Lk 3:22).

God, our Father, is well pleased to have us as His dear children by grace and through faith in His Beloved Son.

Part Two: Our Father's House

If these were the things Jesus had to be about in His Father's house as God's Son, then they are the same things we should be about in our Father's house: hearing and learning God's Word so we can understand the amazing things God does for us in Christ Jesus. When Jesus was confronted about not being with Mary and Joseph, He said, **"Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"** Being in our Father's house is just as necessary for us as it was for Jesus, if we are God's children.

For millennia the church has held services for her members to attend. Typically Sunday was set aside, the Lord's Day, when Christians celebrate Christ's resurrection each week. As things change, the church has done her best to accommodate those who cannot make it on Sundays. Decades ago, our congregation started offering a weekly Saturday evening Service for those who could not make it Sunday morning. During the Covid lockdown, when the government said it was too dangerous for us to assemble in person, we had a Livestream and video recording of the Service that continues, something greatly appreciated by those who still cannot attend church in person.

It is a truism that the world we live in is not supportive of Christians coming to church to be in their Father's house. Too many Christians cave to the world's pressure and adopt the world's schedule and priorities, which means skipping church in their Father's house. Rather than that, Christians, when forced to choose between the world's schedule and coming to church, ought to say with Jesus: "Do you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"

When Jesus visited the home of Mary and Martha, **Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening to His teaching** (Lk 10:40). We should be like her. We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We should hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it so we can call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. We should hear and learn God's Word that strengthens and keeps us firm in our faith until we die. And when we are asked about who we believe in and why, we can answer based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My Christmas Eve Sermon noted the contrast between Jesus being born in a stable because there was no room in the inn and Jesus preparing a place for us in heaven to live with Him forever. Jesus promises us: **In My Father's house are many rooms**. By grace and faith in Christ, we are **adopted as sons** to be in our Father's house now on earth in church and our Father's house forever in heaven. The world tells us that there are better places to be when the Church is called together for worship. We have two choices: we can cave to the world's pressure and seek earthly things that will perish, or we can confess our faith in God, and say with Jesus, "Do you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" In the name of Jesus, Amen.