

Happy New Year! I wish I could give you God's Top Ten New Year's Resolutions List. But I can't. I don't think he has one. However, he himself made a resolution which he has already fulfilled, which made any and all of your possible resolutions irrelevant. He loves you so.

This morning we're going to talk about Jesus' appearance in Jerusalem at the temple when he was 12 years old and about what this might mean for our walk with God and with one another.

## OPENING PRAYER

### LUKE 2:39-52

**When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.<sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.<sup>41</sup> Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover.<sup>42</sup> When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.<sup>43</sup> After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.<sup>44</sup> Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.<sup>45</sup> When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.<sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.<sup>47</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.<sup>48</sup> When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."<sup>49</sup> "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"<sup>50</sup> But they did not understand what he was saying to them.<sup>51</sup> Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.<sup>52</sup> And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.**

If you're a parent, and if you ever lost track of one of your kids, you can imagine how Mary and Joseph must've felt when they realized their son was missing. Did he wonder off on his own? Was he kidnapped? Was he hurt?

They had come to Jerusalem for Passover in obedience to the law of God. They sacrificed a lamb in the temple, and at sunset they cooked and ate it just as their predecessors had done on the night God freed them from slavery under Pharaoh.

After they had done these things, Mary and Joseph packed up for their trip back home. In those days people traveled together in caravans. They enjoyed the companionship, and there was safety in numbers. And so with their friends and family from Nazareth, they began their journey.

They traveled for a day, and they were ready for a rest on the road. As Mary and Joseph unpacked their gear, they realized their son was not to be found.

So the next morning, they returned to Jerusalem. You can imagine their sense of panic. We read that upon arriving in the Holy City, **"After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (v.46).**

It's no accident Luke points out that Jesus was lost for 3-days, lost to Mary and Joseph that is. But he was found. Later, Jesus was lost for 3-days, descended into hell, only to rise from the dead and declare victory. But he was never lost, was he? But with his resurrection he found you and me, and he raised us up out of the shadows, out of the darkness, and he breathed into us life eternal.

Upon finding her son, Mary exclaimed, **"Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."** And he said, **"Why were you searching for me?... Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (vv.48-49)** A better translation reads, "Did you not know that it is necessary that I am among the things of my Father?"

The word "necessary" gives the statement a sense of urgency. And to be "among the things of my Father" reminds me of the sacrificial offerings, "the things" in the temple. Certainly, he was watching the sacrifices being made and thinking about what his sacrifice would look like later on.

**“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house”:** These are Jesus’ first recorded words in Luke’s Gospel, and he identified himself as God’s Son. Already he knew who he was; already he had a sense of calling. He was sent on his formal ministry at his baptism later on, but even as a child he was filled with unique sense of confidence in his spirit. I find this reassuring, knowing that God has a plan and he’s busy working to bring it to fruition even when we cannot recognize his hand.

Let’s think about our church like this: We don’t know what God will bring of our preschool and after school program. We don’t know what the future holds for our work in the Hispanic community. I mean, I don’t know what I’m going to have for lunch this afternoon let alone God’s long term plans for the church! But I do know God’s Spirit works among us and in us and through us to do his bidding.

When I’m told that we have the best church by a parent of a child in our preschool after a midweek presentation; when I see the love of brothers and sisters in fellowship after a funeral; when the people who have been touched by our food distribution program and Pastor Cano’s interpersonal ministry write about their love for him and our work on Facebook, I’m filled with confidence that we’re doing the right thing. It’s God’s plan, God’s Spirit, God’s will which will carry this church forward.

The next time Jesus talked about his relationship to his heavenly Father was when he said, **“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Luke 10:22).**

What our Lord was saying was that you don’t understand how God is your Father yet, but I’m going to reveal his love for you with my sacrifice for your sins. And you don’t understand me either, however, I’m going to reveal that to you also when I defeat death.

Immediately before this story about Jesus in the temple talking to the teachers of the law, there is the story about how Mary and Joseph took him to the temple for his dedication when he was about 6-weeks old. That’s the story that includes the prophetic words of Simeon and Anna. But why the 12-year gap between the

stories? Why not a cute story about kindergarten or prom night? Because God gives us what we need. Consider how each story ends.

The temple dedication concludes with these words: **“When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him” (vv.39-40).**

In summary, Joseph and Mary obeyed God’s law and they returned home, and Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and God’s grace.

This morning’s story about 12-year old Jesus ends like this: **“(Jesus) went down to Nazareth with (Mary and Joseph) and was obedient to them.... <sup>52</sup>And (he) grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (vv.51-52).**

It’s the same story, isn’t it: Obedience, going home, and growing in wisdom, stature, and God’s grace.

I often say I was raised in a barn by a pack of wolves and a den of thieves. Would that I had known Christ’s kind of childhood! Nonetheless, we can all learn from the example of Mary and Joseph who raised their son within the institutions the Lord himself had shaped with his Word, for therein is everything we need to know in order to grow in our walk with him and one another.

We read in **Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it.”** Even if our children have wandered away, I don’t believe they can wander far if God’s Word has been planted in their hearts.

This is all written for our edification, that our faith in Jesus would increase, that our hope in the Gospel would be secured, that we would trust in God more deeply. He is our life, our light, and our love.

For the New Year, maybe we’ve committed ourselves to break some bad habits and to commit ourselves to some good ones. That’s a good thing. As we’ve studied Christ’s early years, I see some things which are certainly worth emulating.

For example, Jesus always referred to God as his Father. That's a great way to consciously think about our relationship to the Lord, for God is our Father who loves us dearly and desires the best for us and our families.

For Jesus, the house of God was his home. This year let's think about this place as our spiritual home, our home where we receive good things from the Lord, gifts which draw us closer to his heart such as his Supper at this altar.

Jesus was only 12-years old, and we read that he was **“sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”** <sup>47</sup> **Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers” (vv.46-47).** We certainly didn't have the same biblical literacy Jesus did at age 12, but we always have the opportunity to grow in the Word. There are hundreds of printed and online resources we can use to become more familiar with the culture, history, and geography of the Bible. We have Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and other resources to get to know the God's Word more deeply, that, like our Lord, we might grow **“in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (v.52).**

This week, my friends, as you begin the New Year may this Word be your word, guiding you in your work and relationships in a new way.

This week may you be filled with confidence, knowing that the Lord has already accomplished everything necessary for your place in eternity.

And this week let us share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.