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Luke 2:40-52
Second Sunday after Christmas
January 3, 2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text, “And 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.”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We always use this final Sunday of the Christmas season to consider the boyhood of Jesus as recorded in Luke 2, the only passage in all of sacred Scripture that gives any detail of those years of Jesus’ youth. And in this one and only passage, and in the understandable question one might ask, “Why this one account of Jesus’ childhood?”, it could be claimed there are three major points upon which to focus: (1) that Jesus knows he must be in his Father’s house, or more true to the Greek, about his Father’s business; (2) that this text highlights, both at its beginning and end, the importance that Jesus grew in wisdom; and (3) that this text teaches us to look ahead and ‘find’ Jesus (if you will) as the fulfillment of the Temple. Let’s take a few minutes on each of those points.

First, why would St Luke want to demonstrate that Jesus knew he needed to be about his Father’s business? There are two reasons for this. You likely already know

(consciously/subconsciously) the first: this comment speaks to the divinity of the Christ child. By desiring to be about his Father's business, Jesus confesses that he understands himself to be, as the angel called him, "the Son of God" (title of equality, not of inferiority). There can be no doubting that Jesus knew himself to be God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. This is a stunning thought, considering that the boy Jesus is also true man! And yet, not only does he know that he is God of God, he also knows He has a divine, Messianic purpose... and, even though his ministry will not start for another 18 years, he is not in his youth ignorant that his path will fulfill all righteousness and lead right back to this very temple in which he now stands, only then not for discussion with the teachers of the Law as impressed audience, but for debate with the teachers of the Law as imposters and adversaries. Yes, Jesus knows who he is and what his life will entail.

But, he also knows what his life *has* already entailed. By saying "I must be about my Father's business," Jesus also confesses the virgin birth. Even though Mary (perhaps unintentionally) disregards it, scolding him, "Child, why have you done thusly? Your father and I, in distress, were seeking you!", nevertheless Jesus upholds the virgin birth as more honor-worthy than even an appeal to the Fourth Commandment. Or, more truly, he upholds the virgin birth as a *true* appeal to the Fourth Commandment in the face of an erroneous appeal. Yes, when confessing the virgin birth and its place

in the coming of the Messiah, you and I ought always remember that the very first one to confess the virgin birth as having happened is Jesus himself! He himself knew that that detail of Christian doctrine must always be maintained, for – apart from it – Jesus is instinctively viewed in our own daily lives as merely a son of Mary; but, by the confession of the virgin birth, Jesus is upheld as the Son of God and savior of souls. Or, one might say, the confession of the virgin birth is the retaining of wisdom, despite how foolish the world disregards it.

Thus, the second point we ought consider about this text is not unrelated to the first: what is important about Jesus growing in wisdom? If the first point regarded Jesus' true divinity, his growing in wisdom highlights his true humanity. Seeking wisdom is a human trait – Jesus shows his humanity as he gains wisdom before God and man.

To appreciate this, we ought ask, “*What is wisdom?*” Wisdom is not just learning your alphabet and arithmetic. Wisdom (*Sophia* in the Greek) is all about adoring and cherishing the holy will of God *as defined by and interpreted through the Christ*. St Paul says as much to the Corinthians, saying, “Christ Jesus became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” And, again, to the Colossians, Paul calls Jesus, “God’s mystery, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” ... so that, this same St Paul may pray for those Colossians that “you may be

filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.”

That’s a much needed trait in our western culture, which has slid into a Christless-ness defined by moral decay and a foolish delusion that self-satisfaction and enjoyment is true wisdom and knowledge and the life and breath and heart of civilization.

We see such things not only in the upbringing of society’s youth, who think that godly work is sinful labor and that they can sit idle throughout childhood, stare into screens of virtual reality, and declare their own truth regarding God’s created order... but we also see it in our society’s adults, who – in their self-serving delusions think they can define life to be free of risk and can sit in total isolation for a year on end, and ignore their God-given vocations to be lived out in the life of the fall, and deny the massive ramifications to the rest of reality, so long as they don’t contract a virus. They claim wisdom of “following the science,” except that “the science” in ‘red states’ Florida and Tennessee is apparently different than “the science” in ‘blue states’ California and Illinois!

Then there is the search for wisdom (or, shall we say, the disinterest in searching for wisdom) among the politically powerful (and, if you think it inappropriate that on this second Sunday after Christmas I would mention the political realm from the pulpit, I would point you to 1930s Norway, in which faithful Lutheran pastors took to the pulpit on Easter Sunday to denounce the Nazism that had

set up an illegitimate and godless puppet government in their native land)...

While we Christians may not currently face such a stark invader as one whose Swastikas draped the balconies, windows, and even arms of its subjects, we Christians do live among a society (and, the Church is always impacted by what happens to the society in and to which it confesses Christ)... we Christians live among a people that seems to believe the subtle imposter that always uses the cover of politics: “Oh, don’t worry. It’s just politics.” Yes, that excuse gives license to indoctrinate the society – an indoctrination that assumes such “religious-free” politics will be safeguarded from the Church’s rebuttal - ...that supposed “religious-free” politics goes on to indoctrinate the society in satanic theology that asks, “Did God really say the Church is essential in times of social illness, that abortion is destructive, that government is to govern in accord with *God’s* will, that there’s a created difference between male and female?” Indeed, we just learned this week that, under the cover of “it’s only politics,” our next Congress will omit all gender-related terms, like man, woman, father, mother. No, Christian. It’s not just politics. It’s the satanic claiming to be wisdom and claiming that anyone that opposes such wisdom is merely being political!

But doesn’t that remind us that, though the search for wisdom and the growth in wisdom is a *human* trait, nevertheless, true wisdom itself is a divine gift ... a divine gift that we utterly lost in

the Fall and, if we're honest with ourselves, you and I – just as much as our wisdom-seeking politicians – must constantly repent of to our neighbor and to God himself. How often do we in daily life stubbornly resist repentance on account of a self-deluded 'wisdom,'... because we claim justification based on a rationale that is not at all wise, but *is* self-serving... not at all godly, but *is* delusional.

But having wisdom is a divine trait (if you will), for wisdom is from God... it's not book smarts, but Bible smarts... not Bible trivia knowledge, but knowledge of the holy will of God and confidence in the Christ he has sent (again, as Paul said it) "that you may be filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord." That can only be done by faith in Christ, for Christ *is* "the wisdom of God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Where we have knowledge of the holy God, then to be wise in Christ Jesus is synonymous with being humble and repentant, for we rightly see our futility before the holy Law. Even as we say that those who are worthy to receive the Supper are those who realize they are unworthy, so also those who are wise are those who know to repent for not living and breathing God's wisdom, but who repent with boldness and confidence to call upon and confess to God on account of the salvation and safety that is theirs in Christ Jesus.

Thus, the Common Christmas card greeting: “The wise still seek him” could also rightly be interpreted, “The wise still *repent and seek* him.” And, if that is the case regarding that Christmas card greeting, perhaps the *Second Sunday after Christmas* greeting card might say, “The wise still believe him to be the fulfillment of the Temple and the salvation of the ages!”

That brings us to the final of our three points: that, in this text, we ought notice the picture of the great reality of finding Jesus after three days. Perhaps it’s coincidental that three days after they feared Jesus lost, perhaps dead, and no longer numbered among them... perhaps its coincidental that three days later Mary and Joseph found him about His Father’s business, causing the temple leaders to marvel at his wisdom, and quietly but faithfully ushering in the dawn of the New Testament. Perhaps. But, doesn’t that all remind us of our risen Lord?... Who, three days after his death had left his followers bewildered and concerned that he was lost forever – and, with him, their faith and hopes (recall the disciples on the road to Emmaus and how befuddled they were by his death, “We had hoped he was the One to redeem Israel, and its been three days since all this happened,” they lamented) – and yet, three days after his death and the fog of it all cleared from their sight by the wisdom of God who *is* Christ in the flesh and risen, they found him about His Father’s business ushering in the new creation in a glory that far outshone – indeed, *fulfilled* – the purposes of the temple?

In other words, this image in our text, of Jesus being found in the temple after three days is a window into the Messiah he already now is at the age of 12, but the mission of which will come into focus in the rest of Luke's gospel... as the writer skips 18 years of life to focus on those final three years that culminate with that week in Jerusalem and those three days in which those who loved him thought all was lost, though He had successfully "finished" His father's business and rest from His labors, to gloriously rise again on that third day and make manifest that He truly *is* the fulfillment of the Temple sacrifice and, indeed, something far greater than the Temple in the eyes of God and for the salvation of mankind.

So then, Jesus gives to you now what the Temple never could. As the wisdom from God, Jesus feeds you the temple of his own body and therein gives you righteousness, sanctification and redemption. And, in giving you access behind the veil that is his flesh, He gives you direct access to the Father, which means – first and foremost – forgiveness of sins, but, beyond that, knowledge and understanding and confidence for daily life... just as St Paul prayed that *for daily life* you would have it: "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.**"

Thus, in this new year of societal uncertainty, new covid strains, and no guarantee of a better year than what was, nevertheless be wise – be sustained by the Word and Sacraments

for faith in Christ, the wisdom of God – so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord... for that manner of walking is grounded in a spiritual wisdom and understanding that yields **calm** on account of one's baptism and confidence in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God that, even today, the divinely obedient Son of God rejoices in being about his Father's business and showering us with forgiveness and building up and sustaining His Church in the wisdom that comes from above.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

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