

# Born Identity

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Luke 2:41-52

Sermon Series:  
iReady?

*And all who  
heard him  
[Jesus]were  
amazed at his  
understanding  
and his  
answers.*

Today, in our Scripture lesson, we move from Jesus' Birthday Party on Christmas morning to, all of a sudden, the story of Jesus as a 12-year-old! It is the story of Jesus, the boy, in the Temple. He is "growing up." We are indebted to Luke. Luke alone gives us the only picture of Jesus' adolescence.

Now every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was 12-years-old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that Jesus was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then, Mary and Joseph started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days, they 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. When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother, Mary, said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." Jesus said to them, "Why were you searching for me?"

Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then the boy went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. Mary treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

At 12-years-old, Jesus is preparing for his Bar-Mitzvah, like our Confirmation Classes for our young teens here. Along with his faithful, observant Jewish family, it would be customary for the boy Jesus, on the brink of manhood, to make the 70-mile trip from Nazareth to the Festival of the Passover in Jerusalem. They are all traveling in a large caravan—Mary and Joseph, and their neighbors, friends, relatives from Galilee.

The Passover draws to a close and this caravan of men, women, and children, then heads for home—all but one! Joseph thinks Jesus is with Mary; Mary thinks he is with Joseph. Both now realize Jesus is missing. They are already a day's journey home to Nazareth; they take another day back to Jerusalem. On the third day, Mary and Joseph, searching, find their boy in the Temple.

From sunrise to sundown, the learned teachers of the Temple sit out in the public courts discussing religious and theological questions. All are welcome to listen in and

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engage. Mary and Joseph find Jesus here. This is not a scene where a “precocious boy” is “dominating” debates with his elders. This is not a picture of Jesus teaching the teachers. This, instead, is the intense 12-year-old Jesus sitting at their feet, “deeply engrossed.” He is asking probing, insightful questions; he is listening intently.

The people witnessing all this are “astonished” at Jesus’ depth of understanding and knowledge. They are “amazed” (*existemi*), but with an edge to it. The Greek word here suggests they are “astonished” at how “scary-smart” this kid is!

Mary and Joseph’s “astonishment,” however, when they finally find Jesus, means something quite different. They are “beside themselves with worry.” The Greek here means (*ekplessō*) “amazed” to the point of being painfully anxious. “Jesus, Child, why did you do this to us?” is the flavor of Mary’s distress. Moms and dads—you get Mary’s reaction, don’t you? You’ve lost a child before, haven’t you? “Son, why have you treated us like this?” Mary is scared stiff, and her scolding of Jesus, frankly, is coming out of her real fear that something dreadful might have happened to her boy. You and I can relate.

“Look, your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you,” Mary says. Here comes one of the key passages in all of Jesus’ life. It is a huge turning point. Jesus replies, “Didn’t you know, Mom and Dad, that I must

be in my Father’s house?” “Didn’t you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?” Mary speaks about “your father [Joseph] and I” in verse 48; but in verse 49, Jesus takes the word “father” and directs it to the God of the Temple. Jesus takes the intimate, familial name “father” from Joseph and gives it to God.

Up to this point in the Gospels, ALL the signs that Jesus is “special” come through others around Him: the angel, Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna. They all point out His “specialness.” Here, it is Jesus, alone, who claims for Himself a Son’s intimacy with his Father. God is Jesus’ “Abba Father,” and Jesus is the Father’s Beloved Son!

This is the day Jesus more fully reveals who He is. This is the day Jesus speaks of the ultimate revelation that He is, truly, fully Human, fully Divine. It is the Christmas wonder of it all—the profound reality AND awesome mystery of Jesus. He is the Son of Man and Son of God! No wonder Mary and Joseph “do not understand” all of what this means. They’re just happy to find their boy, safe and sound, in the flesh! That day, in the Temple, little does anyone realize that the One whom the Scripture foretells is in their very midst!

Here is Jesus—the God of “Silent Night, Holy Night,” who is the same God who created the Silent, Holy, Starry Nights up above! Who created the some 70 SEXTILLION stars in the universe—that’s a seven with 22 zeros! This God of the STARS is the same God in the

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STABLE. This God of the Universe is the same God in the Temple, Jesus.

Luke tells us, then, that Jesus “went down” to Nazareth with his parents and was obedient to them. The boy understands that obeying his Father in heaven means obeying his mother and father on earth.

So, what might God be saying to us through today's Scripture? So what?

I think it is significant, don't you, that churches have far bigger crowds for Christmas Eve services than for Easter Sunday services? Here at VPC, for example, we have our three Easter Services to our five Christmas Eve services. And a Maundy Thursday service and/or a Good Friday service. We offer just one of each of these during Holy Week, at Easter.

What does this mean to us? That there are costs and commitments to following Jesus. It's easy for you and me to come and worship God as a baby in a manger, at Christmas, isn't it? Jesus doesn't speak. He is tender and mild, and so snuggly-cuddly. The baby Jesus can't yet ask things of us. We don't yet need to make a decision about whether or not we're ready and willing to live for him. At Christmas, we're not yet challenged to pick up the cross of discipleship and follow him.

These “costly” things come later at Easter, during Holy Week. The One who comes to save us through the wood and nails of a cross at Easter is still the newborn in the rough, wooden manger at Christmas. No wonder more

people celebrate Christmas—Jesus is just a darling, baby boy at this point. What could He possibly ask of us?

Luke's account reminds us that even though December 25th was just two days ago, we can't contain Jesus to a stable. We can't keep Jesus “away in the manger.” The baby grows up! Earlier, in the Christmas narrative, Luke tells us that after the angel Gabriel appeared to her, Mary “pondered these things in her heart.” Mary ponders the felt-reality, literally, that she would give birth to the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Here, in verse 51, Mary again ponders what all of this can and will mean. Yes, Mary, the mother, is anxious that her boy may have been lost. But Mary, God's chosen servant, increasingly understands the fuller reality of Jesus' life. For Mary, it means relinquishing the baby she has borne, in order that she can follow the man He is poised to become.

THIS is precisely God's invitation to us this morning—to relinquish the newborn baby, so that we may follow the grown-up MAN-SAVIOR that Jesus is to become!

Today, you and I are challenged to keep GROWING with Jesus! Several times in his letters, Paul urges followers of Jesus to “grow up” from being “babes in Christ.” Paul actually uses language that asks us to give up the milk of infancy and move on to the solid food of maturity in Christ (1Corinthians 3:1-2). Today is our chance, men and women, boys and girls, to begin that journey AND to rededicate ourselves to that journey of growth.

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depends on  
Jesus being  
crucified.***

Your very presence HERE, this morning, shows your love for Jesus and your DESIRE to follow Him. To live for Him.

In the closing portion of Luci Shaw's poem, "Mary's Song," Mary ponders the world's salvation offered by her child, offered by her Savior:

*Older than eternity, now he is  
new. Now native to earth as I  
am, nailed to my poor planet,  
caught that I might be free,  
blind in my womb to know my  
darkness ended, brought to this  
birth for me to be newborn, and  
for him to see me mended I  
must see him torn.*

As Jesus grows and matures, God beckons us to grow and mature with Him. Our being made whole depends on Jesus being crucified. As this year draws to a close, God invites us to ponder, like Mary, what we might relinquish in order to grow up to follow Him. What might we let go of for our lives to be "newly-born," and grown to follow our Savior? What might we let go of, that we might die for Him (as He died for us and the world), by His love and mercy?