

Title: Home Alone: A taste of what is to come.  
Text: Luke 2.39-52  
Theme: Purpose and priorities  
Series: Luke #10  
Prop Stmtnt: Following God's plan for your life will put you at odds with many.

(Pic) The Temple in Jerusalem is often referred to as the Temple Complex because it was the Temple proper, plus a series of buildings that were surrounded by large plazas that could accommodate massive crowds of people. You could have several different groups of people numbering in the thousands that could gather at different places at the Temple Complex who were distinct from the other. So, to meet someone at the Temple, particularly at the Passover Time would be like telling someone that you will meet them at Times Square on New Year's Eve.

Most of the life and ministry of Christ took place outside of Jerusalem and away from the Temple. The Temple was the scene for last week's text and this week, and it will not come into play for a long time, however, it will never be out of view. Here is what I mean. Our text this morning concludes the early life of Christ. In fact, even this text jumps ahead about a dozen years. Then, that is it for another 18. That is all that we get in Luke's gospel about the early days of Jesus. Then Christ is getting ready to launch his ministry, which is marked by 3 parts: 1) Ministry in Galilee 2) Heading to Jerusalem 3) Jerusalem. That is why the Temple is never really out of view. Jesus will be coming back here and what is fascinating is that he knows it and he knows why. So, even though many years have gone by since Simeon and Anna met Jesus as a baby there, and even though Jesus is growing up in Nazareth, Luke brings us back to the Temple to tell us of a fascinating event that gives us a taste of Simeon's warning to Mary as well as a taste of what is to come for Jesus and in many respects, for everyone who truly follows him. I want you to trust in Christ that you may know him and follow him. But in order to do that, you need to know what that means. Following Christ is for real but it is serious because Jesus plays for keeps. This is no game which is why this text sets the stage for what we should expect from the life of Christ. And now, for the first time, we read the first recorded words of Jesus.

Read Text:

1. **Jesus enjoyed the favor of his Father.** (40, 52)

Did you notice how the text is bookended with similar summary statements about Christ? Verse 40 summarizes the early life of Christ (first 12 years) by saying that he grew physically, grew in wisdom and that the favor of God was upon him. As a child, he pleased his Father. Verse 52 basically repeats this so that we know that this continued. Jesus enjoyed the favor of his Father because he pleased God by doing everything that he should and never sinned. Sometimes people wonder if Jesus ever played sports as a kid and if he did, would he have always hit a homerun, shot a hole in one, scored a goal on every kick, did he ever trip, ever get a headache or get sick, etc. which is useless speculation. Here is what you and I need to know. Up until this event in the Temple, Jesus grew and became strong. Even as a child he was filled with wisdom and the favor of God was upon him. That is very important to keep in mind because this text

reveals somethings that we may initially respond to with a cringe. Whatever Jesus did here and said here (even as a 12-year-old) is to be understood by us as being wise and right. Then following this event, until the time that Jesus embarked on his public ministry, Jesus only increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. That means that this account is not only helpful for us to have insight into the early life of Christ, but it is to be instructional to us as well. Even here at 12 years of age, Jesus has something to say to us and teach us. We have already seen this theme in the circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ. Jesus operates with a value system that way beyond us.

Therefore, there is both a complimentary and contrasting relationship between Jesus and his parents. Joseph and Mary are faithful to God and they do what faithful Jews were supposed to do. At the same time, they did not fully understand everything about their faith. The thousands of years of OT history and the OT itself was all intended to set the stage for what was here and now, which is Jesus. Jesus had come. The Messiah was on the scene. It was promised by the prophets, promised by Gabriel, fulfilled and affirmed by the angels, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna, now what? Think about that for a second. Gabriel shows to Mary, then to Joseph. The events surrounding the birth of Christ were out of this world. But now what? If you are Joseph and Mary, how do you raise God? How do you teach the Law of God to the Word of God? How do you teach the Creator anything about creation? How do you as a dad tell your son about matters of procreation when you don't understand his birth and when he was the one who spoke life into existence? This time of year, we think about the miracle of the virgin birth but everything about his incarnation, his coming to earth veiled in human flesh is incredible, fascinating, mind-bending and mind-blowing. 2,000 years later we study this with amazement, I simply cannot imagine sitting at a table in a little house in Nazareth with God, the Son, who was eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich (or the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish equivalent), and I am "your dad"?!? Jesus was the perfect child. But he was not raised with perfect parents. He was raised with faithful parents. Faith obeys what has been revealed even as it seeks to understand.

## 2. Genuine Faith follows the Word of God. (41-42)

There were obviously a ton of things that Joseph and Mary did not understand. That becomes obvious here and later on we more of this for Mary. But they were faithful to follow what they did understand. Joseph and Mary observed the Passover. This was a command from Exodus 12 and then codified in Leviticus 24. I find this interesting that Luke points out that Joseph and Mary went up to Jerusalem every year for the Passover "according to custom" (v.43). Observing the Passover was a command, but doing it in Jerusalem was not. Joseph and Mary did it in Jerusalem. It was their custom. They were right to obey the law of God in observing the Passover. The fact that they did it in Jerusalem was a preview of the Passover that would come in about 21 years when Jesus would go to Jerusalem in order to be the Passover Lamb who would put an end to all atoning sacrifices. Faith obeys what God has revealed even as it seeks to understand more and more. And what is always fascinating to me is the ongoing discovery of how God uses our faithfulness now in ways that in the future will be astounding because God will reveal how, for the believer, that he is working all things for good, for those who are called

according to his purpose. There is always a plan. Don't forget that. Embrace that. There is always a plan. (apply)

Genuine faith is marked by a practice of obedience (to what God has revealed) and a posture of humble curiosity because...

### 3. **Genuine Faith learns that there is so much more to know.** (43-50)

Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem with a large group from their area. This was not only their custom it was a custom that many faithful Jews observed for hundreds of years. Going up to Jerusalem for the festivals and holy-days was the occasion for many Psalms to be written. Because Jerusalem was in the mountains, the pilgrims would ascend to Jerusalem and they would often sing the Psalms of ascent (Psalms 120-134). So obviously, Joseph and Mary went with the group and returned with the group. So, in what sounds like the original Home Alone story, Joseph and Mary realize, at the end of the first day of travel that Jesus is not in the group, like they assumed. They are obviously frantic and very concerned and return to Jerusalem, where after 3 days (perhaps 5) of what happens to be sheer panic, and heart-racing distress, they find him in the temple, sitting among the teachers and engaging the teachers in meaningful conversation that amazed all those who heard him. Joseph and Mary are at once relieved, amazed, proud and very frustrated. Obviously, Jesus has never done anything that would give them a second's pause. He is the perfect child, until now (from their perspective). They want to scold him and in fact Mary does, but she really can't give him what-for when the learned scholars of the land are very impressed with him. You can only imagine the conversations that were not recorded. "Is this your boy? You've got to be so proud of him. Wow, you have to be amazing parents, who is his teacher? Where did you study? Where are you from? Oh, Nazareth. I'm, well, pleasantly surprised." Perhaps off to the side, Mary calls him Son and asks him why he treated them his way. The answer that Jesus gave once again revealed that...

#### A. **Jesus knows way more than we can realize.** (49)

Here are the first recorded words of Jesus. And what are they? They are two related questions. He answers Mary's accusatory question with two questions. Why were you looking for me and did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? Which, as we will see throughout the book of Luke that Jesus does this all the time because in the ultimate sense, Jesus is not the one who is to be questioned, we are. Every adult here can identify with Mary's panic and frustration. She assumes that Jesus has no clue to what her and Joseph have been through these past few days. "Son, why have you treated us so?" What would you expect Jesus to say? "Oh mom, I am so sorry, I did not realize that you would be so upset." Wait a minute. That would not be true. Jesus never apologized. He never had to ask forgiveness because he never sinned. What is more, Jesus could not say that he did not know. But there is no apology from Jesus and what is more, remember point 1. Jesus enjoyed the favor of his Father. That statement comes at the beginning and at the end of this text, meaning, this response on the part of Jesus was right. It was hard for Mary to hear this, but it was right. Jesus was telling Mary, "This isn't about you."

She may have been his mother, but he was her Lord, her King and her Savior. She accused him of not caring, when the opposite was the case. Oh, he cared. He cared way more than anyone, even Mary could know. That was why he was in Jerusalem, in the Temple discussing the Word of God. Jesus was planting a flag. This is my Father's House, which makes it my house. This meeting is a preview of another one to come. 21 years later, when Jesus was hanging on the cross, Mary could have wondered why Jesus chose to die like this when it would cause her so much sorrow. Do you see what I mean when I say that genuine faith learns (and keeps learning) that there is so much more to know. That is why genuine faith is marked by a practice of obedience to what God has revealed in a posture of humility. We are always learning because Jesus knows way more than we can realize. In responding to his mother's question, Jesus asks them why they were looking for him and did they not know that he must be in "my Father's house?"

There had to be many moments in the young life of Christ, when Joseph and Mary were amazed. Luke as much as says so. But here, a bomb had to have gone off. At the age of 12, Jesus knew who he was, he knew where he was, he knew where he belonged and he knew what he had to do. Look at what he said at the end of v.49. "I must be in my Father's house." Jesus knew that he was the Son of God. Jesus knew that he was in his Father's house. Therefore, Jesus knew that he not only belonged there, but that in that moment, he had to be there. Why? Why did Jesus have to be there? Do you see it now? Jesus would not only return to Jerusalem at the Passover, but he would go straight to the Temple where he would overthrow the money changers and thieves while quoting from Isaiah 56.7 saying, *"My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."* Luke 19 ends with these words, *"And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words."*

Beloved, put that together. Jesus had to be there at this time because he was making a promise and establishing a preview. Even at 12 he claimed to be the Son of God. It would be that claim, related to the fact that his Father's House was his house that would be the flashpoint for the teachers of the law to hate him so much that they wanted to destroy him. Here in Luke 2, they were impressed with his knowledge of the law. But when he pointed out what it really meant, they would reject it. But for those who believe, we see this event for what it is. Jesus was staking a claim. This is who I am. This is where I belong. I am on a mission. The question is, are you with me?

#### **B. Jesus expects us to connect the dots. (49)**

Go back to the first question Jesus asked in v.49. "Why were you looking for me?" We need to understand this question of Jesus in relation to the next. Jesus was not asking why, as parents they were concerned about the fact that he was missing. He was asking them to connect the dots. Think about it mom and dad, why did you spend so much time looking all over the place for all this time? Think about who I am. Therefore, you should have assumed where I would be.

Jesus expected them to connect the dots. Genuine faith is seen in a humble posture because we are always learning.

I cannot imagine the position that Joseph and Mary were in. How do you raise God? I often point out to parents the folly of making your kids your savior and treating them as if they are the keepers of your happiness. Your kid cannot save you from a meaningless and frustrating life. Your child cannot save you from your sin. That wasn't the case with Mary. Her son could save her from her sin and in fact, only her son could save her or anyone from their sin. It was his mission. This was why he was born, why he was living and breathing, so that he could die as the full and final payment for every single sin of every single person who would ever believe on him, Mary included. Jesus was not being insensitive to Mary and her distress; he was actually being way more sensitive than she or anyone could understand at the moment. And he was leading her to discover this. But, for now, neither Joseph nor Mary understood it.

### **C. There is way more to this life than what we can see. (50)**

Joseph and Mary are like the disciples who appear in chapter 5. It will take them a long time to come to an understanding of who Christ is and what he came to accomplish and they had a front row seat. We actually have quite an advantage over them. We can see now, how these promises and previews were fulfilled and accomplished. I suspect that for some of you that this was the first time that you connected Jesus having to be in the Temple at the Passover when he was 12 to Jesus having to be at the Temple at the Passover 21 years later. For you, this is another, "oh my goodness" moments. It all connects. I don't have to make these things up, I just have to point them out. We can look back at Joseph and Mary and the disciples and wonder, why don't they see what we see? Well guess what? They are doing that right now with you and me. They now know way more than we do and God knows completely and perfectly how all of the details of this life are connected to the life to come. Believe and follow what God has revealed. But obey with humility. Obey with an insatiable longing to learn more because there is always more to understand.

### **4. The Father's Son was submissive to his parents. (51)**

Studying this text has produced a number of moments when I had to just stop, ponder and sit in amazement. There were a number of them but this verse was the biggest for me. Joseph and Mary did not understand what their son was saying. It would be a long time before they would. And yet, what did Jesus do? What did the Son of God do? He was submissive to his parents. He happily placed himself under their authority and did what they asked him to do. This was his mission. In order to go back to Jerusalem one day and die for us, Jesus had to live a perfect life in our place. And he did. The perfect Son of God was the perfect son even though on earth he had imperfect parents who did not fully understand him. But look at the end of v.50. Mary kept learning. She is responding here, just like she did at his birth. She is amazed at Jesus. The day will come when Simeon's prophecy about a sword piercing her soul will come true. She is being prepared for that time. And she is seeking to lean into what she is seeing and experiencing even

from her 12-year-old son, who keeps growing in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

For all the kids and your parents. It is clear from the perfect life of Jesus, that 12-year-olds can and should learn good theology. It is also clear that if Jesus can be a perfect child who is submissive to imperfect parents, that children should submit to and respect their parents and parents are right and godly to expect that.

For those of you who don't know it all, and you know that you don't know it all, this has to be encouraging and challenging to keep looking, keep learning, and do so with a posture of faith.

For those of you who don't know it all but act like you do, this has to be a warning.

For those of you who are confronted with who Jesus is, but resist surrendering to him, where do you think that will lead.

Over and over and over you will be confronted with this reality. Everyone faces this. Jesus is over everything. This is for your good. This is for your joy. This is for your life. This is forever. To embrace this, is to embrace the heart and foundation of everything that is right and true. To reject this is to lose it all. There is no middle ground. Jesus plays for keeps.

We're only two chapters into Luke's gospel. Already, the Messiah is not what we thought he would be. He isn't. But he is exactly what we need him to be and we need humility to see it and embrace it.