

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Travis Loeslie



Luke 2:41-52 ESV

Author and Date:

The Holy Spirit inspired St. Luke to pen his Gospel. St. Luke was “the beloved physician.” He was an educated man, and the quality of his Greek writing attest to his education. Luke’s Gospel was compiled by ca. 60. It is the only Gospel that records the historical account of the boy Jesus’ visit to His “Father’s House” – the Temple in Jerusalem.

⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

- Jesus’ parents were pious and devout people. The Old Testament required that all male Jews journey to Jerusalem for the Passover. There would have been a celebration with this feast. A lamb would have been killed in the temple. A meal would have featuring that lamb after sundown. Arthur Just reminds us: “The feast celebrated the greatest redemptive event in the history of Israel, when God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. The angel of death killed all the firstborn of the Egyptians, but “passed over” the firstborn of the Israelites because of the blood of the lamb on the lintel and posts of the door.” (Just, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 129).
- The feast lasted seven days. Pilgrims had to remain in Jerusalem two days. Men would have had to go up to the feast, but not necessarily women or children. This account accents the faithfulness of Mary and Jesus as they would have gone up with Joseph.
- “Jerusalem was the place of Jesus’ destiny,” (Just, 130). Here in Jerusalem Jesus would come to finish His exodus after the transfiguration “in Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). Jerusalem was the city where Jesus was going “as the days of his being taken up were being fulfilled, and he set his face in order to journey to Jerusalem” (9:51) (Just, 130). The city was where Jesus weep over the sins of His people (Luke 19:44). Here He would be rejected and die for sinners. From here He would be raised for the salvation of

mankind. The Gospel foreshadows the future events that led to the culmination of His saving work.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day’s journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

- The holy family journeyed up to Jerusalem. Jesus stayed in Jerusalem while His parents began home. They “suppose” Jesus for a day that He was with the company of relatives and friends.
- Soon they realize, the boy was gone! Where was He? Hurt? Taken? Alive or dead? There is nothing worse than a parent’s fear when a child goes missing from them. The extended family searched for Jesus.
- How could this have happened? William Arndt explained: “The traveling to and from the great festivals in Jerusalem was done by those living at a distance in companies or caravans. Neighbors, friends, and relatives formed groups whose members could furnish assistance to one another in cases of illnesses or attacks by highwaymen. Naturally it was not necessary for them to travel in anything resembling military formation. Some of the group would walk more leisurely than others. In this instance, the parents of Jesus, probably with a few special friends, traveled alone, knowing that the meeting place agreed on as resting place for the night they would find their companions.” (W. Arndt, *Luke*, as cited in Just, 130).

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Still, this must have been a terrible fright to Joseph and Mary. Luther sees this as an example of the cross that the couple would have had to bear in life. Mary rejoiced above all in being the mother of our Lord. She must have

above all in being the mother of our Lord. She must have questioned her worthiness in the midst of this terrifying moment. Perhaps she wondered if God was taking the boy away. Such afflictions must every parent go through in their life. God uses the cross to humble us to live according to His Word and not our own understanding and arrogance.

⁴⁶ **After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.** ⁴⁷ **And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.**

- It isn't until after three days they find Jesus! Where was He? "In the temple" in Jerusalem. He was among the teachers, the doctors of the Lord's people. This was an informal catechesis class. Jesus sat among the teachers. He interacts faithfully with them, in questions and answers which showed His profound understanding of His Father's reign and work.

⁴⁸ **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."** ⁴⁹ **And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"** ⁵⁰ **And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.**

- Mary chides Jesus for causing her distress in searching for Him. Certainly she expected unconditional obedience from her son. The fourth commandment tells us, "Honor your father and your mother." Jesus seemed to His parents to disregard this commandment and general concern to love His neighbor. Yet Jesus was driven by a deeper regard for His Father's house and the business that went on there. "I must be in My Father's house." Jesus' was bound by devotion to the will of His heavenly Father. He was not sinning against Joseph and Mary. They were *supposing* too much and being overbearing in their role as parents. Jesus was devoted to fulfilling the first table of the Law while observing the feast and talking about God and His works with the preachers of His youth. Jesus has to bear the cross of His vocation as the Son of God and Savior of the world. He endures the "misunderstanding" of His parents and the exasperated chiding of His mother. Jesus endures even this misunderstanding to take the place of poor sinners on His way to the cross and shameful death for us.

⁵¹ **And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.**

- Jesus goes willingly with His father and mother. St. Luke accents the nature of His relationship to them: he was submissive, or better, "being obedient" to them. That is the nature of the son's relationship to a father and a mother. Jesus sets a perfect, sinless example in all stages

of His life, including childhood. Mary remembered these things and passed them on to Luke and to the Church for us to know enough about Jesus in His young days.

⁵² **And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.**

- Jesus "increased" in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. This phrase is a parallel to the early days of Samuel (1 Samuel 2:26). The Greek word *prokopto* means literally "to lengthen out by hammering," thus it is "to lengthen" or by extension "to increase." This increase refers to Christ's human nature.
- Luther emphasizes that Christ developed naturally on Luke 2:40, against "hairsplitting" on this point. Some taught that Christ had a fullness of wisdom even from conception, which He does, according to His divine nature. Luther urges us to let the text stand as much as possible. He says,
- "We all must acknowledge that Christ was not always cheerful, notwithstanding the fact that he who is filled with the Spirit is also full of joy, since joy is the fruit of the Spirit, according to Gal. 5,22. Neither was Christ always gentle and calm, but sometimes he was indignant and vexed, as for instance, when he cast the Jews out of the temple, John 2,15-17, and when he was angry and grieved at the hardening of their hearts, Mark 3,5." (Luther, *Church Postils*, 306).
- Luther continues: "Although the Spirit was in him from the first moment of the conception, yet as his body grew and his reason naturally developed as in other men, so also was he filled and moved by the Spirit more and more." Luther goes on to say, "...he waxed strong and advanced in wisdom, but the words tell us plainly in age and in stature, and as he grew in stature his reason developed, and with the development of his reason he became stronger in the Spirit and filled with wisdom before God, in himself and before men..." (Luther, *Church Postils*, 306).
- Luther says about Luke 2:52: "We must understand them [these words] simply as saying that he grew continually and waxed strong in the Spirit, just as any other man..." (Luther, *Church Postils*, 31).

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