

The Second Sunday after Christmas
St. Luke 2:40-52

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Every year they made this trek—Nazareth to Jerusalem. There was business to conduct at the temple. It was time to be in the presence of God. It was time to make a sacrifice.

This time, Jesus got to go. He was 12 years old—no longer a boy, He was a man, now. As such, it was time for Him to sit at the feet of the teachers for Torah instruction.

And, wouldn't you know it, the first time He is receiving instruction from the Torah teachers, He amazes them. He was asking questions the teachers never heard before; He was causing them to think of things they had never thought of before. This young Man, supposed to be a student, had become the teacher, and the teachers became the students. This was no ordinary 12-year old sitting with them. Where did He learn these things? Joseph was a carpenter, certainly not a trained theologian, so it couldn't have been from His "father." Well, St. Luke wrote, "And the child grew and became strong, *filled with wisdom*. And the favor of God was upon him."

This was the very Word of God in the flesh, the Wisdom of God made manifest, dwelling among the teachers. The teachers were supposed to be teaching Him; that is to say, not that they were giving Him instruction, but that the instruction they were to be giving was Him, pointing to Him. Their instruction was enfleshed before them; the Torah was walking and sitting and talking in bodily form before them.

And, while all of this was going on, the Passover festivities had come to an end. Mary and Joseph and their company of Nazarenes were returning home. They naturally supposed that Jesus was in their company; He wasn't going to travel back to Nazareth clutching His mother's hand, but would be playing with His friends somewhere else in the caravan. It was only when it was time to bed down for the night that first night did they realize that He wasn't with them. Back to Jerusalem they went.

Three days of searching finally reveal that the Son was in the Father's house. The Torah incarnate is there amazing the teachers—teaching the teachers.

I have heard it said that man can be gifted in many things—art and music, sport, math and science—even at a very young age. One marvels at these things and props the prodigious children up as examples of genius and talent—people such as Mozart, Tiger Woods, and Tim Tebow, who all showed their giftedness at young ages. There are even fictitious examples of them, such as in shows like *Doogie Howser, M.D.* and *Numb3rs*. However, never has there been anyone gifted in theology. The simple explanation is that the knowledge of God, the Word of God, is not natural to fallen man, and in fact, is completely opposite to man's fallen nature—which, as the Scriptures teach, is completely rebellious toward God. That's not to say that God couldn't do it if He wanted to, but I'm not aware of anyone so gifted in theology. Gifts in art and music, sport, math and science, however, while affected by this fallen, sinful nature, are still naturally given (and can be and are often used by that rebellious, fallen nature in opposition to God).

So, Jesus is, for lack of a better word, an anomaly. He is, from the teachers' standpoint, exhibiting a gift that has never been seen before, has never been heard of, and should not even be happening!

That's when His mother and guardian Joseph show up. They had been frantically searching for Him, and they let Him know it: "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." Jesus, of course, corrects them. He had been teaching all day, for about three days or so, and even in this, He has a teaching moment. Of course, He's also gentle; He is,

after all, God who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (cf. Joel 2:13); “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” There are a few things Jesus is teaching as He speaks to them:

- First, He reminds them that God is His Father. Certainly Joseph was given the unenviable task of caring for the Christ as He grew into a man, and Joseph did so commendably.
- Second, if God is His Father, then there should not have been any need to search for Him. He was going to be where He was supposed to be to do the task for which He descended to earth and took on human flesh and blood—He was about His Father’s business.
- Third, His Father’s business took place in the temple. That’s where God’s instruction to His people originates. That’s where God’s grace to His people emanates. That’s where God is present for His people. He was in His Father’s house, therefore, He was in His house. And this served as a reminder to them of who He was: Immanuel as the angel Gabriel had announced

He is “YHWH Saves,” Immanuel, God with His people to save them. And He has a peculiar way of doing it, a way foreign to this fallen nature that is unable to comprehend God and His ways, naturally. His peculiar way is as was mentioned a few days ago, at the Circumcision and Name of Jesus: God becomes one of you—takes your flesh and blood—and places Himself under His own Law to keep it perfectly for you, only to spill His blood and give His flesh over to death in your place for your fallen inability to keep His Law perfectly yourselves. He comes perfectly and sinless and dies a sinner’s death—dies every sinner’s death.

He keeps the Law of God—His own Law—perfectly even at this point in today’s Gospel lesson. For, there, Luke wrote that, “[H]e went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.” He left His Father’s house and returned to his guardian’s house, and there He was submissive to them—His mother and guardian. It’s an interesting word there in the Greek which is here translated “submissive to.” The word Luke used conveys a deeper meaning of being placed under the divine order of them—subordinate would be a better word, being ordered under. He was ordered under His guardian and mother as a child—He deigned to place Himself under that order, not here at twelve years of age, but from the moment He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, indeed from the very foundation of the world (as one reads the bigger picture from Genesis).

In today’s text, Luke wrote that the Word become flesh who placed Himself under His own Law is perfectly keeping the 4th Commandment. He, even though He is King of kings and Lord of lords, subjects Himself to those who would have earthly authority over Him. In today’s Gospel lesson, that was the teachers and His mother and guardian.

And it’s a good thing He did, too. How many of you would willingly place yourselves under the authority of another? Or, better put, how many of you perfectly obeyed your parents, under whose authority you were divinely placed? How many of you, now, perfectly and willingly and without grudge subject yourselves to the authority of the rightly elected and divinely placed government—whether you voted for the officials or not, whether you agree with the officials or not? How many of you students are perfectly subordinate to your teachers? No, don’t answer, I’ll do it for you. Not one of you!

It’s a difficult thing to do: willingly submit 100 per cent to every divinely ordered authority placed over you. In fact, it’s an impossible thing for to do. And, sure, where there are proper channels to express dissent and force change, it is indeed right and salutary to use them, for even these are God-given. But your fallen, rebellious natures would rather strike out on your own, regardless of any authority placed over you, and often in spite of that authority. This is the sin against the 4th Commandment, a sin against God who gives parents, teachers, pastors, employers, and good government for your good.

Today you hear of Jesus’ subordination to His mother and guardian. This would not be the last time He placed Himself under the authority of another. For while it is rightly said that He did so His

entire life by perfectly keeping His Law, there is another example in the Garden of Gethsemane when He was arrested by the temple guards. And again, when He was brought before the Sanhedrin. And again, when He stood before Pontius Pilate, where He even told Pilate, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above." (John 19:11) And again, as He was flogged in the praetorium. And again, as He allowed Himself to be crucified.

All of this He did for you, dear hearers. He did this for all, those who are unable and unwilling to keep His 4th Commandment perfectly. He did this for His guardian and His mother. Yes, His mother... who would be without her Son for three days again.

Luke wrote in chapter two that Mary pondered all that happened to her young Son in her heart, and that she marveled at Simeon's words, even these words: "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (*and a sword will pierce through your own soul also*), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35) These events and words when Jesus was a newborn infant, 8 days old, 40 days old, and 12 years old likely served as a reminder to His mother who He was as He was hanging on the cross, helping to teach her that He did not belong to her, but that she belonged to Him, for He was her Lord, though Her dear Son. And you, dear Baptized, are with her, held with her by Her Son's crucified, risen, and ascended hands, which were pierced for her and your transgressions.

He came as the subordinate King of kings and Lord of lords, He who is Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace, came as the Son of Man and subordinate to His own Law. He who was equal to God, "the glory equal, the majesty coeternal" (cf. Athanasian Creed), emptied Himself and became obedient and subordinate to His own Law, even to the point of death, the death of the cross. He who was Lord of all became servant of all, even to the point of His death on the cross. Now risen and ascended, God has highly exalted Him, placed Him over everything, so that at His name every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, even under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (cf. Philippians 2:5-11)

All of this for you. It cannot be said enough, dear hearers. The Lord Jesus Christ was conceived and born for you. He was circumcised and named for you. He was subordinate to his guardian and mother for you. He kept the entirety of His Law, placed Himself under it perfectly, for you. And He suffered and died on the cross for you. Or, as St. Paul so simply put it, if I may paraphrase, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for you, that you might become the righteousness of God in Him. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21)

In other words, God made Him who knew no sin to take your sin from you, giving you His perfect obedience in exchange, and His righteousness. You are declared right with God in your Baptisms, where you have been placed in Christ and His righteousness. Your perfectly obedient and subordinate Lord of lords and King of kings has taken your sin from you and died with it in your place on the cross. Now, when God sees you, dear Baptized, He sees His Son, for you are His son in Christ, redeemed and granted perfect remission, that is to say, you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.