

## **“UNDERSTANDING JESUS”**

2<sup>nd</sup> Sun. a. Christmas, C

Sunday, January 3, 2010

Zion Lutheran Church, Beecher, IL

Sermon Text – Luke 2:50

Old Testament Reading – 1 Kings 3:4-15

Epistle Reading – Ephesians 1:3-14

Gospel Reading – Luke 2:40-52

Our sermon is based on the Gospel reading previously read, particularly v. 50 which reads: **“And [Joseph and Mary] did not understand the saying that [Jesus] spoke to them.”**

Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

A friend of mine who’s a pastor in Florida once told the story about a family who had a rebellious son. All during the boy’s high school years, before he became 18, he begged and pleaded with them to sign off on allowing him to get a tattoo.

The parents steadfastly refused, and the boy became more and more ill mannered about it. Finally, the boy’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday came and went, and he no longer needed his parents’ permission to get a tattoo.

Within a few days the boy came home, took off his shirt, and proudly (with a bit of taunting!) told his parents: **“Look at my back! Look at my nice tattoo!”**

With a shudder, the boy’s parents looked, and sure enough, going from shoulder to shoulder was a huge tattoo comprised of but one word.

Smiling to himself, the father read it: **“CHO as?!?”**

To that, his proud son said: **“No, Dad! Can’t you read? It says ‘Chaos!’ C H A O S”** (he spelled the word)

The mother, now smiling too, said: **“No son! Your tattoo artist can’t spell. The word on your back spells the word “CHOas...” whatever that is!” If you wanted the word ‘chaos...’ they reversed the vowels. You have ‘CHO as’ permanently written on your back!”**

I never heard what happened after that, but that young man, for the rest of his life, has a reminder written across his back in big, bold, *and colorful* letters... that his desire to rebel against the wishes of his parents... his desire to have chaos *and not* peace in their home... well, it backfired... and it gave his parents *still another* “I told you so” moment! The boy didn’t understand his parents and their desire to keep him from doing something to his body that would be irreversible!

In today’s Gospel reading we see another example of poor communication between a set of parents and their Son. But *this time, it’s the parents* who don’t quite understand. It’s Joseph and Mary... who need to have their eyes opened to truth. Let’s consider this for a few minutes.

As you heard, the Holy Family had gone to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of the Passover. They attended, as the Law required.

When the Passover was over those who'd come from Nazareth left for home... traveling together in a large group. Joseph and Mary assumed that Jesus was safe and was somewhere within the group with friends.

It probably didn't even dawn on them that Jesus had remained behind. That's because... after all... *their child was Jesus...* Who *really* was the perfect Child. He was sinless, and therefore... always obedient... *never* crossing them... *never* challenging their authority over Him. Jesus had never shown Himself to be like that newly-turned 18 year old who just *had* to have a tattoo!

But, as you heard, after one day of traveling back toward their home in Nazareth, it was discovered that Jesus was nowhere to be found. We can only imagine the anxious night that Joseph and Mary spent, waiting until first light, so they could re-trace their route back to Jerusalem.

Finally, on the third day after they'd left Jerusalem to go home to Nazareth, they found Him. And, where was He? In church. He was in the temple, sitting at the feet of the temple rabbis... asking questions of them so as to have more wisdom regarding the Word of God... and reciting answers as they quizzed Him... testing His knowledge of that same life-giving Word.

Mary approached Jesus and probably in a mix of relief and anger said: **“Son, why have You treated us so? Behold, Your father and I have been searching for You in great distress!”**

And Jesus, rather than taking a defensive, arrogant stance regarding what had happened... in humble, calm, and respectful words He asked her: **“Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?”**

Over the years Joseph and Mary had forgotten... or at least put in the recesses of their minds... all that they'd experienced regarding their Son. They'd “pondered” and “treasured in their hearts” such things as...

...His miraculous conception & virgin birth...

...the wonder of the shepherds at the manger...

...and the incredible moment in this same temple when faithful Simeon took their 40 day old Son into His arms... and declared that as of *that* moment... Simeon could **“depart in peace”** (Lk. 2:29, ESV) from this earth!

In other words, they seemed to have forgotten that their Son was *also* the Son of God... and here and now... as a 12 year old... old enough to be considered as an adult male... that here and now... their Son was politely reminding them that His purpose on this earth was to **“be in His Father's house”** (v. 49)... or... as the King James Version translates this... **“Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?”** (Lk 2:49, NKJV)

And “**in His Father’s house**” His Father’s “**business**” was to be found. That business was to attend to the lost sheep of Israel... to seek willful, rebellious mankind, who all so often, insist on having *not* “CHOAs...” *but chaos* in their lives! Who all so often thumb their noses at God’s plan for orderly, peaceful lives... and seek out chaos *and willing embrace it* along with the fruits of the world of darkness.

They do that, rather seek the fruits of the Spirit... “**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, [and] self-control.**” (Gal. 5:22-23, ESV)

We shouldn’t really be all that surprised that Mary and Joseph misunderstood their Son. That’s because nearly everyone else who encountered Him *did the very same thing!* This failure to understand Jesus would be a theme of His entire life... and would be something that He strove to overcome in nearly every encounter that He had while on this earth!

But thanks be to God that through the power of the Spirit, Mary’s eyes were opened to the true reality of the meaning of her Son’s words.

*And...* thanks be to God... that through the work of that same Spirit... using Word and Sacrament... that we, *too...* understand Jesus’ words... and we understand the life that they bring!

Using His Word that cuts like a two edged sword, we see that yes, we, too at times are rebellious... wanting chaos and rebellion to be our companions. We also see that such “companions” as those will lead to eternal death in hell marked not with a permanent, silly, misspelled tattoo... but rather... marked as one who is cast into that utter darkness reserved for those who *remain* in rebellion against God!

God has opened our eyes to see our rebellious sin... and repent. That is... we “change our mind...” (which is what “repent” means) we change our rebellious attitude toward God’s call to follow His Word of Grace. We, like so many other millions of Christians, see... *and believe...* that Jesus took over “**His Father’s business...**” and saw it through to complete and eternal success!

Some 21 years after this day, just outside the temple walls, Jesus bought us back from what our rebellious actions deserved. He traded His perfect life for our sins... suffering hell in our place... and His Father in heaven accepted the transaction!

And now... through repentance and faith... forgiveness of sins is ours. We’re free to live in peace and joy... chaos, turmoil, and life without meaning... is... by God’s grace... behind us!

As we begin this New Year, may we all resolve to faithfully hear our dear Lord’s Word of life and rejoice in it. For in His Word He tells us of the removal... *not* of some permanently botched tattoo... but of the removal of our sins... which gives nothing less than life and salvation. May we never forget that in Him... chaos is removed... and we have His peace that endures for eternity! [Amen.]

The peace of God that passes all human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. [Amen.]