

1st Sunday after Christmas
December 29, 2024
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Ordinary and Extraordinary

Luke 2:41-52 (EHV)

Every year his parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. ⁴²When he was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the Festival. ⁴³When the days had ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Since they thought he was in their group, they went a day's journey. Then they began to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us this way? See, your father and I have been anxiously looking for you."

⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be taking care of my Father's business?" ⁵⁰They did not understand what he was telling them.

⁵¹He went down with them and came to Nazareth. He was always obedient to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. ⁵²Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.

Dear Friends in Christ,

This is the second time in a week that we have heard about Mary treasuring up all these things in her heart. The first was the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. In many ways this was an ordinary birth. Mary carried Jesus for about nine months and gave birth. Perhaps we could say that she gave birth in less than ordinary conditions, in a place where the animals were kept with a manger for Jesus' bed. But it was also an extraordinary birth. For this Child is the eternal Son of God. Angels announced his birth to shepherds who hurried to the manger to see their Savior. Ordinary and extraordinary at the same time.

Twelve years later, Mary again treasures up something ordinary and extraordinary about her child, Jesus. We will walk through this account of the boy Jesus at the temple and treasure up these things in our hearts just as Mary did.

Every year his parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. ⁴²When he was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the Festival.

Every year! This was an ordinary part of life for many Jews. It was certainly a habit for Mary and Joseph. Every year they made the trip to Jerusalem for the Passover. This ordinary thing was a big operation. It would take several days to walk to Jerusalem. As we see later, you traveled with friends and relatives. Many mouths needed to be fed on the journey and then for the week or so near Jerusalem. After the Passover festival, you all traveled back together.

It was a law of God that every male goes to the Passover every year. But it does not seem like Joseph was just going because of the law. This was not some work righteous thing by which he would earn favor with God. Joseph brought Mary and Jesus along every year as well. It would have been a joyous time as the families traveled together. Passover itself was a celebration of God's great salvation, a remembrance of how the Lord rescued them from Egypt. And it was a shadow of how God would rescue them from sin. The blood painted around the doorframes of their houses in Egypt saved the firstborn from death in the tenth plague. The blood of the Lamb of God shed on the cross would rescue the world from sin and death and the devil.

So, the family went every year to the Passover in Jerusalem. We don't go to Jerusalem for Passover every year, but we do have customs and traditions that are ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. Every year we gather with friends and fellow believers on Christmas Eve to marvel at the birth of our Savior. Every year we gather on Christmas morning to see the Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Maybe you have family traditions around Christmas that you do every year to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. We might see these are ordinary things since we do them every year, but they can also be extraordinary when they connect us with Christ through his Word.

On the other hand, perhaps we've allowed the custom of being in God's Word to slip away from us. We go on Sundays and Christmas but either haven't started or have stopped being in God's Word daily. It seemed so ordinary that we just didn't see the point. There were other, more exciting things to do. Lord, forgive us when we fail to see the value of your Word and treat it with contempt. Open our hearts to treasure the Word made flesh and his Word written in Holy Scripture. Our Savior and his Word are extraordinary for our faith.

The story continues:

⁴³When the days had ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Since they thought he was in their group, they went a day's journey. Then they began to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

As faithful as Mary and Joseph were, Jesus was more. Twelve-year-old Jesus did not want to leave Jerusalem. The story of God's rescue had been told and retold countless times that week. The people would have been telling the great stories of the Old Testament all week. It was like VBS but a thousand times better. So, Jesus stays in Jerusalem to spend more time discussing God's Word.

Jesus is a human being. He has a human body which he used to walk to the temple courts; ears which he used to listen to the teachers; and mouth which he used to answer. He has a human mind which learned and grew and developed. From the outside, Jesus was an ordinary boy. But even at twelve, the people could see that he was extraordinary. He is able to discuss the things of God with the best teachers in the temple courts. He is able to give amazing answers and intelligent questions. His understanding is far beyond the other twelve-year-olds. How amazing it would have been to sit with Jesus that day.

For the ordinary looking boy with a human body would return to Jerusalem in a couple of decades to give his body unto death to pay for the sin of the world. The ordinary-looking boy was the Passover Lamb who would atone for the sin of the world with his holy, precious blood. His human mind grew and developed, yet he is the eternal God who knows all things. His parents didn't know where he was and yet he is the omnipresent God. Ordinary and extraordinary at the same time.

⁴⁸When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us this way? See, your father and I have been anxiously looking for you." ⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be taking care of my Father's business?" ⁵⁰They did not understand what he was telling them.

It is very ordinary for a parent to be astonished at the actions of their child. What were you thinking? Why did you do that? But what is extraordinary is that the parents were the ones not thinking correctly. Jesus understood his purpose in life. Mary and Joseph did not understand. They should have. Both had been told that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. The great festivals and sacrifices in Jerusalem they attended every year told them what the Messiah would

do. He would be the Passover Lamb whose sacrifice would save them from sin. He would be the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement whose blood would atone for sin. Jesus had to be about his Father's business and that business was to proclaim the truth of God and fulfill God's plan to save the world from sin and death. While we don't know how many of the details Jesus understood at twelve years old, it is extraordinary that he already knew that God is his Father and that his purpose is to carry out his Father's will.

⁵¹He went down with them and came to Nazareth. He was always obedient to them.

It is ordinary for a child to go back and live with his parents. It is normal for a child to sometimes obey his parents. What is extraordinary is that Jesus carried out his Father's will perfectly. Here we see him keeping the 4th Commandment to honor his father and mother. Though Joseph was not his true Father, Jesus was obedient to him and to Mary. Although Jesus is the Son of God who created all things that now exist, he humbled himself to be obedient to sinful, earthly parents. And he was always obedient. He never sinned against them. He never sinned against anyone on this earth. He never sinned against his Father in heaven.

And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. ⁵²Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.

Let us also treasure up all these things in our hearts. For Jesus was about his Father's business when he was born in Bethlehem, when he was twelve at the temple, and when he was thirty something on a cross outside of Jerusalem. We go through his life every year. It may become so familiar to us that it becomes ordinary, and we forget the extraordinary nature of our Savior's work. For all he did was for his Father and for you. He is our substitute, for his perfect life counts for us. His innocent death counts for us. Make it a goal this year to grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord Jesus Christ. His story may be very familiar but what he has done and what he will do for us is extraordinary.

Amen.