

# Epiphany I

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Date: 07 January 2024

Preacher: Father Randall Russell

[ 0 : 00 ] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Dearly beloved in the Lord, I will keep this short.

What is it about our Lord's pilgrimage to the temple at age 12 that St. Luke, that the evangelist St. Luke considered to be so important that he actually placed it in his gospel?

I mean, of all the events in our young Lord's life, why is this one, our Lord in the temple at 12, so important? Exactly what lesson are we supposed to learn this morning?

Well, in its cultural context, the life of a 12-year-old Jewish boy in our Lord's Day was the life of a child who was about to become a man.

Now, in our Lord's Day, there really wasn't any religious ceremony like a bar mitzvah per se. But there was still this understanding that around the age of 13, a young Jewish boy would very soon become a young Jewish man.

[ 1 : 09 ] And similar to their Jewish counterparts, around this time, young Jewish boys would also be encouraged to study under a rabbi or a group of rabbis in order to grow in their knowledge of the faith, which is most likely what our Lord was doing in this morning's gospel.

And the lesson I believe we should all take from this morning's gospel is this. If, as a flesh and blood human being, even our Lord needed to study the scriptures, needed to worship and pray, and needed to grow and even mature in his understanding of what it means to be a child of God, how much more do we all need the same?

For things like studying the scriptures and growing in the knowledge of our faith, praying the morning and evening offices, and increasing in acts of charity and mercy and holiness, these things are not just pious options or things we are free to do or not to do in addition to our one obligatory hour of worship week.

No, for all these things should instead be understood as essential and vital parts of our Christian formation, things that as a human being, even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ needed to do.

For by the grace of God given to us at our baptism, we all are the children of God. And as the children of God, we are to follow our Lord's example.

[ 2 : 53 ] We are supposed to mature. We are supposed to grow. And we are supposed to become God-pleasing adults. For even though the Holy Scriptures encourage us all to have a childlike faith, our faith is most certainly not supposed to remain childish.

For this morning, St. Luke tells us how even our Lord increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with both God and men.

And if this was an important part of our Lord's life, important even enough for the evangelist, St. Luke, to include in this morning's gospel, shouldn't it be an important part of our lives as well?

After all, spiritual growth and maturity really are a vital part of our faith and of our salvation.

And ultimately, this is why it is included in this morning's gospel. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.