

Epiphany I

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Preacher: Father Randall Russell

[0 : 00] And wise, and wise, and wise, and wise. Here again a portion of this morning's Gospel. Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

And when Jesus was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. Amen. I don't know about you, but it seems like only a couple weeks ago we were celebrating our Lord's birth.

And today we read in this morning's Gospel that our Lord is already 12 years old. So I guess it's true what they say. Messiahs grow up so fast.

But all jokes aside, this is often how sermons based on this morning's Gospel usually go. They're almost always about Jesus growing up.

[1 : 05] And how at the age of 12, he received religious instruction in the temple. Kind of like how modern Jewish boys today receive religious instruction before the age of 13.

Before their bar mitzvah. And how, if as a flesh and blood human being, even our Lord needed to study the Scriptures.

Even our Lord needed to worship and pray. And even our Lord needed to grow and to mature in his understanding of what it means to be a flesh and blood child of God.

Then how much more do we all need the same? For both maturing and growing in our faith is as important to our salvation as it is to be baptized and to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But I'll come back to that later. Because for now, I'd like for us just to focus upon what our Lord might have meant when he told Mary and Joseph.

[2 : 18] After they searched everywhere in Jerusalem. When he told Mary and Joseph, why do you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?

Now, I'm not the biggest fan of that modern Christmas hymn, Mary, Did You Know? But I do think it's important to acknowledge that there were some things, at least at that time, that not even the Blessed Virgin Mary seemed to know.

For example, when our Lord asks Mary and Joseph, Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? This morning's gospel text tells us that neither Mary nor Joseph understood the statement which he had spoken to them.

So what is it about that statement? That statement where our Lord says, I must be about my father's business. What is it about that statement that Mary and Joseph didn't seem to understand? Well, I'm not certain that they knew exactly how all this business of our salvation would play out. Or at least how everything they experienced at that time in the temple was a preview of things to come.

[3 : 54] For in this morning's gospel, we have our Lord going to the city of Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Passover with his family. Just as he would again go to the city of Jerusalem several years later on Palm Sunday in order to celebrate the Passover with his disciples.

And once there, he would be questioned by both the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the temple. And they would all marvel at his answers.

Similar to how our Lord answered and asked questions of those in the temple at age 12, with them too marveling at his answers. And just as after Christ's death and burial in the tomb, no one would see or hear from him again until three days later.

So also at the age of 12, Mary and Joseph didn't see or hear anything from our Lord for three whole days. And after searching day and night for our Lord in the city of Jerusalem, what does our Lord finally tell Mary and Joseph after they find him on the third day?

Our Lord says, why did you seek me? Which is not unlike how the angels asked the women at the tomb on Easter Sunday, why do you seek the living among the dead?

[5 : 24] Or how in the gospel of John, our Lord asks Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, woman, whom are you seeking? For I believe that the business of which our Lord was referring to, when at the age of 12, he asked both Mary and Joseph, did you not know that I must be about my father's business?

Is this business of our salvation? It is the business of our Lord's passion, death and resurrection. For in this morning's gospel, we receive first, a preview of what is to come in our Lord's death and resurrection.

And second, an encouragement to mature and to grow in our faith, just as our 12-year-old Lord matured and grew in this morning's gospel.

Or as in the fourth verse of the hymn we just sang, for he is our childhood's pattern, day by day, like us, he grew.

Therefore, let us study the scriptures, not only so that we might better understand this business of our salvation, but let us study the scriptures so that we might actually put all this business of our salvation into practice and increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men, just as our Lord did at the end of this morning's gospel.

[7 : 07] For a big, a big part of this business of our salvation is to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow Christ's example.

And that is not just a one-time ordeal, but an ongoing way of life that each one of us is called to live, a life that is not stagnant or just comfortable with routine, but a life of constant growth and maturity in the forgiveness, the love, and the grace of Christ Jesus, the one true God.

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