**The Perfect Child**

A father tells this story,

“As ham sandwiches go, it was perfection. A thick slab of ham, a fresh bun, crisp lettuce and plenty of expensive, light brown, gourmet mustard. The corners of my jaw were aching in anticipation;

I carried it to the picnic table in our backyard, picked it up with both hands but was stopped by my wife suddenly at my side. “Hold Johnny (six weeks old), while I get my sandwich,” she said. I had him balanced between my left elbow and shoulder and was reaching again for the ham sandwich when I noticed a streak of mustard on my fingers. **I love mustard.** And I had no napkin. So I licked it off.

It was **NOT** mustard. No man ever put a baby down faster. I sprinted to the nearest tap with my tongue protruding.”

I wonder if anything like this happened to Joseph. I’m sure most of us have wondered at some time what it was like to be a member of Mary and Joseph’s family.  Maybe you have wondered what Jesus was like as a child.

We would like to know a bit more about his childhood and his growing up in Galilee.

We wonder about his childhood because the Bible tells us next to nothing about his early days.

Most parents with young children would probably like to know what it would be like to raise a perfect child. Imagine a child whose twos weren’t terrible – no temper tantrums, no back talk, no refusing to go to bed, no fights with his brothers and sisters.

* What was Jesus like at school?
* Was he always top of his class?
* Did he always get perfect marks in every test no matter what the subject or how hard the test was?
* Did he always win the sport’s trophies for “best and fairest”?
* When he was a teenager, did he have pimples?
* Did he ever get sick – like a tummy wog from eating food that was bad or simply a cold?
* What kind of music did he listen to?
* Was he “really religious?”

Another question that has intrigued people is this – **at what point in his life did Jesus realise that he was God?**

The Bible skips over Jesus childhood years and we next hear of Jesus when he was 12 years old.

St. Luke doesn’t give us anything more than these bare facts of Jesus’ childhood:

* that Jesus was born and laid in a manger,
* that he was circumcised and named on the eighth day according to the custom of his time,
* that he was brought to the temple at 40 days as the Old Testament Law required,
* and that he was missing for three days and found in the temple engaging the teachers of the Law.

Luke summarizes the silent years of Jesus’ life in these words: *“Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and people.*”

So what are we to make of this one story set between the nativity events and the baptism of Jesus when he was 30 years old?

Luke is keen to point out that Jesus was a true Israelite and that his upbringing in the home, his participation in religious ritual, his moral training by pious parents and teachers indicate that he was raised in true Judaistic fashion.

Perhaps Joseph and Mary were taking Jesus as part of his preparation for his responsibilities as an adult Israelite.

Mary and Joseph travelled the ninety miles to Jerusalem in a convoy of friends and relatives from Nazareth.  There was greater safety in large numbers.  So it isn’t surprising that when the group headed north back to Nazareth no one noticed that a twelve year old was missing.  Everyone assumed Jesus was with someone else, probably off playing with the cousins.  It wasn’t until they had travelled a full day that they realized Jesus was not with them.

If you have ever lost a child, you will know what fears must have gone through the minds of Mary and Joseph as they searched for their son amongst all the travellers.  One by one every person they asked shook their heads indicating that they hadn’t seen the boy and with every negative reply their fears grew.

* Was he safe?
* What could have happened to him? The worst is imagined.
* Where could he have gone?
* We should have kept a better eye on him.
* We should have been more careful.
* Why didn’t we look for him sooner?

They spent three days looking for him, going to places they had visited in Jerusalem, asking people in the streets if they had seen him.  Luke doesn’t give us any detail here but leaves it up to our imagination.  He is sure all of us know what it is like to lose someone.

Three days later, they find him in the temple, sitting amongst the religious teachers amazing them with his intelligent questions and understanding of the answers they gave.

When Mary and Joseph finally find their son you can understand their reaction – they don’t know whether to be happy or angry.

* “What a relief that you are safe.
* Don’t you realise how worried we have been?
* Why have you put us through all this?

” And then for the first time we hear from Jesus himself. He gently reminds them whose son he really is.  He indicates that he has special relation with his heavenly Father and has a special mission to carry out.

Respectfully he answers his mother, **“Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?**” (Luke 2:49).

These words are not the words of a rebellious teenager breaking away from his parents.  We know that Jesus went home with them where he was obedient to them.

 I think Luke is telling us something about what kind of teenager Jesus was. It seems that at this point the twelve-year-old Jesus is saying that he already has an understanding of God that would go beyond that of any other teenager.

He recognises God as *“my Father”;* he is not only the son of Mary but also God’s Son.
**He always was God** but we see here a growing realisation of this fact.

There is another point that can be made from Luke’s remark about the young Jesus being **OBEDIENT** to his earthly parents.

Perhaps Luke is foreshadowing the obedience that Jesus would demonstrate to the will of his heavenly Father when he would suffer and die for us all.

It was God’s plan that his Son would take on himself our sin and the curse that goes with it, be arrested and be unfairly tried by the teachers and leaders of the Jews.  He was **obedient** to his heavenly Father to the point of sacrificing his own life to save us all.

At his birth, he was named Jesus which means **“Saviour**”, and in an act of obedience he was just that – **our Saviour from sin and death.**  He was obedient unto death for our disobedience.

When we think of:

* our disobedience to the call to be faithful disciples;
* our disobedience to the invitation to pray to our heavenly Father;
* our disobedience to the command to love one another and to work together as his people in the church;
* our disobedience to the leaders in government, our parents, and those in authority;

we are glad that Jesus was obedient to the point of dying for us **– God’s rebellious children**.

Our text today gives us a glimpse into Jesus’ early years, but it especially gives a glimpse of the growing and maturing Jesus.  Even here, at the age of twelve he is the obedient Son of his heavenly Father, and of his parents. His obedience took him to death on a cross, so that we who are **disobedient** might also become **God’s perfect sons and daughters.**

 **Let us pray:**

Jesus take me as i am**,**

I can come no other way.

Take me deeper into You,

Make my flesh life melt away.

Make me like a precious stone,

Crystal clear and finely honed,

Life of Jesus shining through,

Giving glory back to You.

 AMEN