**Luke 2:40-52 (ESV)**

And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. [41] Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. [42] And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. [43] And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, [44] but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, [45] and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. [46] After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. [47] And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. [48] And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." [49] And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" [50] And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. [51] And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. [52] And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

**“At Home In God’s House”**

Blessed are we to hear God’s Word as given from the Father, proclaimed in the Son, and established by the Holy Spirit. Amen. On the Sunday of a new year, we first begin by catching our breath. The month of December is a marathon race. People are on the move from one place to another. With limited time for being off work and kid’s out of school, most parents try to maximize every moment they can. Go here go there. See this person and that person. And if your fortunate enough, maybe a trip here or take a vacation there. When the crowds after Christmas disperse, traveling has come to an end, and everyone is just plain tired. It is satisfying to be able to say, “There is no place like home.”

God’s Son has always been with the Father from eternity, but being born of the Virgin Mary meant He also had a home on earth. The savior sent into the world was familiar with family. Only St. Luke gives a glimpse of how the holy family managed along the way. Of all the stories to tell, this is far from what any parent would ever want to bring up. Hoping to return home to everyday life after the Passover, Mary and Joseph had to turn back to Jerusalem. Losing Jesus just did not make sense. He was no five year old boy, but twelve, and knew the family custom for taking this trip. The only answer came from Jesus saying, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” No other place will work for Jesus than to be the good news of great joy within the house of God.

The temple was a treasured possession by the Jews. It stood as the place of God’s presence promised by His Word. It also served as the place of animal sacrifice to cover sin. For Mary and Joseph to go and eat the Passover Meal each year was what any faithful Jew would do. They were honoring how God by His Exodus delivered Israel from Egypt. There was no connection made with Jesus and the temple in Jerusalem. Yes, He was God’s Son, who would save their people from their sin, but only He knew what that would mean. We read in our text, “…After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.” The last place they looked was the first place they should have come. Jesus, as a youth, yearned for God’s Word because He was the Word made flesh. He was the true temple that would take away the sin of the world so all could worship God by His holy Name.

Jesus wisely welcomes us to return home. How often is it the same thing every year? Churches everywhere swell with people only to watch just as many go back to their lives. Honoring Christmas is not the same as celebrating the presence of Christ. This goes beyond one-day a year, but comes among us all the time by the Word and Sacrament. Most have fallen into thinking that church is an option, but it is not. Breaking the third commandment is when we despise preaching and God’s Word. It is the devil’s way to have us not be at home with the forgiveness we are to hear in Jesus’ Name. Thank goodness, our Lord harbors no grudge against laziness or hatred toward His house. Jesus remained in the temple and saw it as the place that spoke of Him. There is no reason for any to search around for the savior in their lives. The baptized have a home in the church by the promise made out of water and the Word. It is to return in repentance recognizing by faith how much God welcomes us with the good news of Jesus.

More than observing a tradition, Mary and Joseph witnessed how their child would make all things alive by His Word. St. Luke points out, “And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished.” No glory of man could explain the wonder of God’s love. Jesus was the wisdom from above who took Bible study in the temple to a whole new level. He did not deny the place of teachers because people need teaching. What the messiah gave by His presence was a better hope than lessons on life or popular fads. None had salvation by learning what to do. God’s Son was going to do it all for them as the perfect Sacrifice. Jesus later said to the Jews as an adult, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me…” John 5:39. The Laws of life must surrender to the Gospel as life. God the Father gave His Son to be the center of attention at all times and places.

Jesus wisely teaches us to be at home with Him in His Word. Few today like learning. Some see teachers as merely a threat of authority over them. Others so confused by false teachers do not know what to believe is true. St. Paul, one of the first teachers of the church shared the truth that lead to all truth. He said of Jesus,

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which (God) set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

Pride of self can make us despise teachers. The sinful nature can lead us to fear pastors. The Devil can make us question the truth told by anyone. There is One no sinner needs to despise, fear, or question. Jesus brings the wisdom and glory of the cross. He is the savior bound to set us free to repentant and put our trust in Him.

The Gospel promises good news to be at home in our lives and so Luther could say,

“…When we seriously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, new pleasure, and a new spirit of devotion, and it constantly cleanses the heart and its meditations” (Tappert 379:101).

The greatest wisdom is what God brings us of His Son by Word and Sacrament. It makes the church into the body of Christ for we hear Jesus’ voice. He joins the baptized together to partake of His holy body and blood shed for our sins. This temple built upon Christ makes a home in our hearts and minds. Jesus begins in this house of God, but goes out into our individual homes to help others. Let us say and do those things that welcome Him who dwells in us. No better place for the savior to be the good news is within this house of God. Take a breath, for God is always busy being our savior, even after Christmas. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.