

Christmas 1, 2009  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
Luke 2: 41 – 52

Our sermon text this morning is the Gospel lesson, Luke chapter 2, the story of Jesus at age about 12, the day he caused His parents Mary and Joseph “great anxiety,” it says. “Great anxiety” to say the least—they had traveled as a family to the big city of Jerusalem, and the child Jesus got separated from His parents, and was lost for three days! Till at last He was found, safe and secure in the house of God.

Grace mercy and peace be multiplied among you in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, AMEN.

The first thing I have to say about this Gospel lesson, coming as it does just a couple of days after Christmas: My how time flies. My how time flies, it seems like only yesterday that Jesus was a baby. Well, ok, it *was* only yesterday that Jesus was a baby, we were celebrating Christmas, and now look, He’s 12 years old! Time flies.

Obviously, the Bible has to condense the events of Jesus’ lifetime, picking and choosing key moments here and there, kind of like a highlight film on Sports Center. And we understand that. Still there is a bitter sweet lesson here, for all of us, especially parents and grandparents. Time does fly. It flies when you’re having fun, and I’ve noticed it still moves along pretty quickly when you’re not doing anything in particular. So the days you have with those you love, those days are precious. Speaking as a parent myself, it

really does seem like only yesterday. And I know that soon enough, today as well will be nothing more than a memory. So treasure each day you have together, and give thanks to God, who holds in His hands all our tomorrows, and who has promised us a Kingdom where time shall cease, and every good memory shall be gathered together into a great Here and Now, that simply never ends.

But back to the Gospel lesson. Speaking as a parent myself, I have noticed over the years that there are certain traits in children, that are going to look better in an adult. Traits in a child that, if you can only be patient mom and dad and hang with it long enough—well, it'll look better in an adult, I promise. For instance, independence. We want our young adults to be independent, right? We want young adults to be able to make decisions and pursue careers and live successfully on their own, we are very glad when we see 20 year olds who are becoming independent. We cringe when we see that same thing in a 2 year old. *Willfulness* in a two year old drives us crazy, it's the Terrible Twos, but you just sort of have to remember that given 18 more years and a lot of love, that irritating willfulness is actually the beginning—of the kind of independence we'll want to see then.

Again, small children can be stubborn. They dig in their little heels and don't want to budge, and it makes mom a bit angry. Little children can be

stubborn, but don't we want to raise young adults who can be persistent? Isn't persistence a good thing, and isn't it something that maybe grows out of childhood stubbornness? And so on, other examples too—if you have a very small child in your life right now, think about what they do on a daily basis that drives you berserk. Then think about how, with a lot of love and patience, that same trait may someday grow, into an adult virtue.

Now Jesus. He was faithful to God the Father as a 12 year old boy. And it caused Mary and Joseph to go prematurely gray. Losing your child in a big city? Can you think of anything scarier for a parent? What an awful experience! And yet, here's a trait, we really do want to see in our children when they become adults—we want you to have faith. It pains us—I don't want to cause any problems at the dinner table today, but it pains us to see young adults drift away from church—certainly Mary and Joseph were gratified to see faith in Jesus the adult. They were pleased and quietly proud to see the hand of God at work in the man Jesus became. It was just kind of rough at times when He was a kid. We know the feeling. Hang with it parents. What aggravates you now and causes your hair to go gray, just may be the kernel of what makes you proud later. Pray for strength, pray for guidance, love without ceasing. God will find a way.

And you, in your life personally. No matter how old you are, you are after

all still but a child of God. No matter how many years you've lived, it's a short time compared to eternity. You are still a child, in God's eyes. What traits do you have, that drive your heavenly Father crazy? So many times we picture God as an old guy with grey hair—well where did He get the grey hair? What'd you do, huh? Some of your traits—some of your habits—are simply sinful, and need to be repented, and outgrown, and left behind. Little kids get angry over nothing—sometimes we do too. Little kids can say things that are hurtful—adults? Sound familiar? Little kids can be selfish and self centered, and need to outgrow that. Well, how many adults are still working on that one too? We who are older, we are still little children in God's eyes, we have habits and traits to simply repent, and with God's help just out grow and leave behind.

And we have other traits, that just need to mature a little bit. Stubbornness *can* become persistence. A focus on what I need to be happy, can deepen into a way of life that asks what can I do to make others happy? A love of self can expand, to a love of family, and community, and church, and world, and God, and speaking of God. Well this is His work, isn't it? This is what He does—He takes us as we are, and loves us. And because He loves us, He will not let us stay the same. He died to forgive us, He rose again to save us, He is with us now—shaping and guiding and maturing. Growing us up

always, into His image and likeness. Children on earth, His friends forever in heaven—such is the will of our Father. And may it be so for all of us, in the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.