

Focusing our eyes on Christ. (Luke 2:41-52).

Traditionally, this Sunday is known as the Feast of the Holy Family, and one purpose of it was to portray the family unit of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as the model for all Christian families. This passage depicts Jesus' innate sense of the divine wisdom that exceeds that of normal human beings like his parents. Early Christian interpreters argued that these passages proved that Jesus is truly the Son of God "Just as everything else about him was extraordinary," Origen argued, "so his boyhood was extraordinary as well, that it might be filled with the wisdom of God."

In today's story Jesus returns to the temple for one of the three annual pilgrim festivals described in Torah. As before, the temple turns out to be the place where others see something in him that his parents do not. Later he will come back again and again as an adult, drawing both followers and critics with his teachings. For Luke, the temple really is Jesus' home- his "Father's house" – where he finds his purpose and the people who can spot it in him.

The discovery of Jesus in the temple gives practical instruction concerning holiness: "For it is there that the son of God is found. If you ever seek the Son of God, look first in the temple. There you will find Christ, the word and wisdom that is the Son of God.

Luke reveals that Jesus has impeccable Jewish credentials. Jesus parents faithfully make a pilgrimage to the Passover festival in Jerusalem. At the temple, Jesus engages the teachers by listening to them and asking them questions. Jesus undertook the Jewish interpretive practice of the time as the Church does in the acts. This clearly shows the wisdom that Jesus had just from his tender age of twelve. In Jewish traditions several heroes were remembered as possessors of extraordinary wisdom such as Solomon, Samuel and Daniel. Similarly, the messiah is also portrayed as one endowed with divine wisdom. All who heard Jesus were amazed at Jesus understanding and his answers. Perhaps, they couldn't expect him to be knowledgeable at such a tender age, but there was something peculiar about Jesus Christ. Let us ask ourselves that what is it that makes Christ distinct from humanity? What is it that draws us closer to Christ? Why do we have passion to serve Christ?

By staying behind, Jesus bothered his parents, they intended to return home, but they had to cut short their journey to look for Jesus. Jesus passion for the temple teaching is evident when he was unconsciously left behind by his parents as they were returning home. It is noticeable that the parents of Jesus travelled far before recognizing that they had left Jesus behind in the temple. Perhaps, this was an ample opportunity to Christ, for his formation towards future ministry. When they found him with the teachers in the temple, they saw a clue to his identity and work.

Focusing our eyes on Christ gives us a revelation of what we are anticipated to do as we commend ourselves for the service of the Lord. What is it that Christ is calling us to do differently this year 2021 in the ministry work? Someone once said that there are three kinds of people. The first group of people is those who let things happen, the second group make things happen, the third group wonder things happen. Each of us belongs to one of these categories. Those who let things happen are not getting involved in what God expects of them. Whether things go wrong or right. Those who make things happen are proactive, they get involved in what the Lord is calling them to do. Administer what the Lord expects of them. In scripture, we have men and women who walked in obedience before God. They took God at his word. This is contrary to the third group of people who wonder things happen. Jesus Christ was committed to the teachings in the temple. This later on gave Christ power to work miracles during his public ministry when he had grown up. For Luke, the ministry of Jesus is the model for the Church. How might we proof our focus on Christ transformative teaching as a model for our lives? Jesus paid attention to what was happening in the Father's house.

By the time Luke wrote, the Romans had destroyed the temple. Nevertheless, the temple was still a central symbol of Judaism. Luke affirms to us that Jesus was familiar with the temple and its teachers. This shows that the ministry of Jesus and

the Church continues in the tradition of the temple. The temple continues to be a sacred place where Christians commune with the Lord. The Psalmist says that;

“How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.” In this text, the story of the child Jesus’ visit to the temple shows how Christ is like us in ways that are significant to our understanding of Jesus. In the first instance, the baby Jesus encounters two competing loyalties which are common with us. His loyalty to his parents and his loyalty to God, the Father. Secondly, the humanity of Jesus reveals that he is like us as he grew and developed. Jesus learned things that he was not aware of. Just like every human being has a desire to grow from one level of life to another. We are able to achieve our potentials in life as we grow. Ultimately, our growth as Christians should be holistic physical growth, intellectual growth but above all, we should desire spiritual growth that connects us to the Lord. Remember, “Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.”

Jesus gained even more wisdom about the realm of God as he grew and matured. Jesus continued to mature in the awareness of God’s grace pouring out through the realm. If we commit our lives to Christ, we shall not only nurture our children to grow in the fear of God for the acquisition of wisdom but this also enables us to gain divine favor. As parents, we would always work hard to ensure that we give

our children good care, protection and above all, ensure that they get quality education for a prosperous future, which is excellent. This is the same passion that we should have towards nurturing our children in the fear and knowledge of the word of God. For the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. We live in a society where modernity tends to lure our young people away from God. The technological invention and innovation have been misused to drive the attention of young people to ungodly and worldly passion at the expense of the creator God. This leaves us with a great challenge to guide our young people to the knowledge of the word of God for us to continue to have a blessed generation. The Lord our God punishes children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject him, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love him and keep his commandments.

Focusing our eyes on Christ enables us to be obedient to him, just like Jesus was obedient to his parents. For we know that obedience is better than sacrifice. Jesus began his life in a very humble way. Eventually, this enabled him to fulfil his mission here on earth. As we continue to focus on Christ this year, we should declare our absolute obedience to Christ for he is the author and finisher of our faith. Jesus is able to meet us to the point of our needs up to his riches in glory. I know that we faced a lot of challenges in the previous year that was necessitated by situations beyond our control. Many people could have lost their loved ones, jobs,

financial hardship because of economic meltdown, some businesses went under and high rate of unemployment. Ultimately, we still believe that the Lord holds the future for us. Let us continue to soldier on in Christ without getting weary, for those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion that endures forever.

In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen