

In the previous passage Luke has told us about the wonders that surrounded the birth of Jesus and of the prophets who met Him as His parents carried Him into the temple. One of them pronounced a prophecy over Him, declaring Him to be the Messiah. The other confirmed the prophecy telling those who were awaiting His coming that He had finally arrived. Twelve years passed before the next account of Jesus at the temple

³⁹ And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Luke 2:39 Once again Luke is careful to point out that Joseph and Mary were devout Jews and that every requirement of the Law regarding Jesus' life was carefully done. Luke left out the flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-14ⁱ). They had been away for several years, but the small town of related people would have kept their home and any property safely preserved for their return.

⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. Luke 2:40 The angel told Mary she was highly favored. Here we read that Jesus had the favor of God upon Him. And we know the favor of God is with those who trust in Jesus (Romans 8:28ⁱⁱ). When everything seems to go perfectly I often declare, "Favor!" What I mean is God is so good He had a hand in the details (Psalm 84:11ⁱⁱⁱ). But whether things are to our liking or not, if we are in Christ we are favored. We should see every detail including difficulty as the favor of God. We may not understand why it is a blessing, but you can be sure God has a good reason and allows it for your good (James 1:2^{iv}). Trust Him to be who He declares Himself to be, a good God of steadfast love and faithfulness (Psalm 86:15^v; 62:8^{vi}).

Jesus grew and became strong, both physically and spiritually. A builder in Nazareth worked with stone more than wood. Jesus was tough even in his youth. His hands would have been calloused. His clothes would have often been dirty because of His work. He understands what it means to be tired. Sephoris, the town where most of His employment would have been, was four miles away. He would have walked there and back each day. He knows the aches and pains of the human body. Scholars speculate that Joseph died not long after this account when Jesus was twelve. Jesus would then have had to make a living for His mother, brothers, and sisters. We gloss over those twenty years of hard and faithful labor. He was doing His work in obedience to God's word and to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31^{vii}; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12^{viii}; Ephesians 4:28^{ix}). That can be true no matter your occupation. Butcher, baker, barber, or member of the bar, every occupation can be done to God's glory. How would Jesus do your job? Show that to your fellow workers and customers and God will be glorified.

Jesus was filled with wisdom. A sinless life is an expression of the wisdom from above (Proverbs 16:17^x). There is worldly wisdom and there is godly wisdom. One is just being clever for temporary personal gain of one kind or another, and the other is knowing what is best in the light of eternity (James 3:15-17^{xi}). We'll see His wisdom impressed the spiritual leaders of His time.

⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. Luke 2:41 This was a costly journey for a poor family like Joseph's. The required lamb for the family sacrifice was expensive (Exodus 12:3^{xiii}). Imagine taking three weeks off work, walking five days one way with your family, camping at night along the way, and paying what would be a month's wages and then walking five days back all to keep the religious law. It was a celebrative time with relatives, but it came at quite an expense. The fact that the family went faithfully every year shows how devoted they were.

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, Luke 2:42-44 A Jewish boy's bar-mitzvah was at the age of thirteen, however a year before the boy could attend studies in Jerusalem to increase understanding of the Torah. Jesus would have been introduced to a rabbi and maybe one of the members of the rulers, the Sanhedrin. The tradition carries on to this day. You can stand at the Western Wall and watch young boys being shown how to put on their prayer shawl and bind the law to their arm and put the phylactery on their forehead and say the traditional prayers. There is usually a rabbi there who will guide them in the process.

When it came time to return, the camp of those from Nazareth packed up and headed down the Jericho road. Jesus must have been with cousins quite often, so Joseph and Mary assumed He must be with them. But He wasn't with the other boys.

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. Luke 2:45-46 After a day of traveling they did not see Him anywhere in the caravan, so they returned to Jerusalem and searched for three days. If I did that when I was twelve I would have been grounded for three months. And by this time Jesus' brothers and sisters would have been with them so the whole family was out of their element, away from their group, searching through this crowded city so much bigger and unlike their own. There would have been extra expense to buy food for the family. Finally, they spotted Him in the temple.

He was sitting among a group of teachers. We don't know if these were scribes or rabbis or part of the Sanhedrin, but we can assume that they were knowledgeable about the Scriptures. Jesus was listening to them teach and asking them questions.

⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. Luke 2:47 They were asking Him questions too. And ALL who heard Him were amazed how much He understood and His answers to their questions. He is, after all, the Word incarnate. He has no self-seeking motives in His interpretation. His Spirit is undefiled by sin. His mind is unclouded with personal desire to impress or succeed. Wouldn't you have liked to have been sitting in that circle and asked a few questions of your own? Don't we all have questions we'd like to sit down with Jesus and discuss?

I want you to know that you can. It's called prayer. And if you are open to hearing whatever He will tell you or point you to in the Word, in His perfect time He will answer you. He promised that if you seek you will find and if you knock the door will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7^{xiii}; Jeremiah 33:3^{xiv}). You can search the Scriptures and find what the Word declares about the matter. That is the same as hearing from Jesus, for He is the Word made flesh (John 1:14^{xv}).

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." Luke 2:48 Mary was astonished. Let me give you my interpretation and please understand this is just my take on it. Those listening to Jesus were amazed. Mary was astonished that such a good boy would let His family go through such anguish for four days looking for Him. He had delayed their journey and caused them great anxiety, and here He was sitting with these teachers having a great time. That is why her retort to Him was, "Son, why have you treated us so? Look, your dad and I have been searching for you in great distress!"

Notice it wasn't Joseph that rebuked Jesus. I had a step-father from the time I was eleven and my mother insisted that she be the one to discipline me. I wonder if it was the same with Jesus. Joseph was His step-father, and the angel appeared to Mary while Joseph only saw the angel in a dream (Matthew 1:20^{xvi}).

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.* Luke 2:49-50 I knew how to answer my mom in a way that would soften any discipline that was coming. I was clever and conniving. Jesus on the other hand, just spoke truth. Should Mary have known that Jesus would have been in the temple? Well, yes, she knew He was holy, the Son of God. Where else would He be? On the day the family left Jerusalem Jesus may have gone to the campsite and found they had left and so welcomed the chance to go back and talk about God's Word with those who studied it. It sounds like He was teaching them through the questions He asked which is a rabbinical way of teaching. And that is what He did with His mother. He asked two questions that revealed truth. He wasn't rude, but He set things straight. Joseph and Mary didn't seem to get the point of the questions, maybe because of their frustration.

We have so far in Luke seen the breaking of the four-hundred years of silence with the voice of angels and prophets. But **here for the first time is the voice of the Word Himself.** These are the first recorded words of Jesus, and they are rich. They not only instructed His parents, reminding them of His calling, but they have a compound meaning. His Father's house was the temple, but after Pentecost the temple would be the church of living God, every born-again believer. He must be in us! We are His, blood bought, the bride, and He has promised to never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5^{xvii}).

Did you notice that Jesus did not say, "You should have known I would be" but rather "Did you not know I must be." It wasn't optional for Jesus. He belongs in His temple.

He will later declare that He only seeks to do the Father's will (John 5:30^{xviii}). The Spirit directed Him there. At times the Spirit of God can direct us to a priority that seems to contradict the Scriptures. We are to honor His father and mother (Exodus 20:7^{xix}). But we are also to love the Lord with our all. We are to know and understand the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:5-6^{xx}). The Jews dealt with these conflicting situations by declaring some commands superseded other lesser commands. They mistakenly decided a gift to the temple was more important than the need to honor your parents. Personal gain from the gift clouded their judgment (Mark 7:9-13^{xxi}). The Holy Spirit directed Jesus to return to the temple and discuss God's Word. Today we have the Holy Spirit to direct us as to the greater priority in God's Word when we are conflicted.

Jesus' question to Mary probably went over her head. How like us when we do not understand what God is taking us through! I find the Spirit often asks me a question that opens my understanding and convicts me at the same time. I become disheartened when a long string of events seem to go against what I think should be happening. I cry out to God and ask why He isn't helping me. But then He asks me, "You don't think I'm helping you? Do you trust me (Proverbs 3:5-6^{xxii})? Have I ever failed you? Do all things work together for good to those who love me?" Conviction changes perception, but only if we take time to hear His voice of conviction.

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. Luke 2:51 Even though He was already immeasurably superior to His parents, He submitted to them. Why? Because the Law commands it. The Second Adam was doing what the first Adam and all of Israel had failed to do that He might reclaim what Adam had lost (1 Corinthians 15:45^{xxiii}). Mary kept all these events in her heart like treasures in a secret place. She pondered these words of Jesus, trying to understand the implications. Were the things she and Elizabeth spoke of for three months coming to pass or was it entirely different from what they expected?

Do you have some treasures in your heart? If you remember the day you accepted Jesus to be the Lord of your life, that is certainly one. The men's breakfast was describing the times God got our attention through sparing our lives, whether accidents or illness and we amazingly survived knowing God intervened. We treasure turning points in our spiritual walk and that of our children as well. We treasure times when God spoke clearly to our hearts, whether by the Spirit or through a brother or sister in Christ. I treasure the time I surrendered my life to the fullness of the Spirit and the call to preach the Word. I treasure dear friends in the Lord, both living and those who have gone before me into glory. We need to count our blessings and consider the many treasures God has given us in this life, especially when we are disappointed or discouraged.

Mary certainly treasured the greeting of the angel, the prophecies that were given her, her time with Elizabeth, this experience with Jesus and pondering His question to her. She surely had many other treasures as Jesus matured.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Luke 2:52 As Jesus grew He grew in wisdom as well. People liked Him. Who doesn't like love, joy, kindness, goodness, and all the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23^{xxiv}). This meant He increasingly had the favor of the town.

His total obedience to the Spirit meant He was also growing in favor with God. How is that possible? It's just like we are with our children when they are good and loving. They grow in our favor. When we are right with God, we are right with others because we treat them with respect. This favor of the town will change when Jesus must warn them of their hearts' conditions, but until then, the town thought He was a most excellent son, even if they weren't sure about how He was conceived.

He grew in wisdom. Verse 40 told us He was filled with wisdom. This tells us that Jesus didn't come into this world with omniscience. He didn't know everything. Though He was full of wisdom, He learned from the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit (John 14:26^{xxv}). He is our perfect example. We should be increasing in wisdom as we study God's Word and are taught by the Spirit. We should be learning from our mistakes to recognize when God is speaking and when it is just our mind. We should be learning from difficulties and times of need that we can trust God in everything. And in our times of loss, we should be gaining the wisdom that when we have Jesus we have everything we need. Grow in wisdom.

We were not born sinless like our Savior, but if we have been born again, it is time to start expressing the fruits of the Spirit so that we find favor with others and share the love of Jesus. It is time for us to grow in wisdom as to how to answer others when they ask of the hope that lies in us (1 Peter 3:15^{xxvi}), or when they ask us why Christians have certain convictions.

Jesus obviously did His best to present Himself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15^{xxvii}). We should as well. We have this false impression that Jesus just knew it all supernaturally, that somehow it was easier for Him to work and yield Himself to God. He was a human just like us and tempted in every way we are, yet He went through it all without sin (Hebrews 4:15^{xxviii}). That is why we need to follow His perfect example. Grow in wisdom! Study God's Word. Learn to die daily (1 Corinthians 15:31^{xxix}), spend time in prayer, and obey the Holy Spirit. You'll be storing up treasure in heaven.

- Questions:
- 1 What can Jesus years of labor teach us?
 - 2 In what ways did Jesus grow?
 - 3 Where did Jesus go? Why?
 - 4 How was Jesus teaching others?
 - 5 Can you put yourself in Mary's shoes?
 - 6 How can we know what to do when conflicted?
 - 7 What should we lean on when things don't go as we think they should?
 - 8 Why was it important that Jesus keep the Law?
 - 9 Do you have some treasures in your heart? List the brightest.
 - 10 How should we grow?

ⁱ **Matthew 2:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt

ⁱⁱ **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Psalms 84:11 (NIV)**

¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

^{iv} **James 1:2-3 (ESV)**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

^v **Psalms 86:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

^{vi} **Psalms 62:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah

^{vii} **1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)**

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

^{viii} **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (ESV)**

¹¹ and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ¹² so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

^{ix} **Ephesians 4:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

^x **Proverbs 16:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life.

^{xi} **James 3:15-17 (ESV)**

¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

^{xii} **Exodus 12:3 (ESV)**

³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household.

^{xiii} **Matthew 7:7 (ESV)**

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

^{xiv} **Jeremiah 33:3 (ESV)**

³ Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.

^{xv} **John 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

^{xvi} **Matthew 1:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

^{xvii} **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

^{xviii} **John 5:30 (ESV)**

³⁰ "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

^{xix} **Exodus 20:12 (ESV)**

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

^{xx} **Deuteronomy 6:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

^{xxi} **Mark 7:9-13 (ESV)**

⁹ And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' ¹¹ But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

^{xxii} **Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

^{xxiii} **1 Corinthians 15:45 (ESV)**

⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

^{xxiv} **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)**

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

^{xxv} **John 14:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

^{xxvi} **1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

^{xxvii} **2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

^{xxviii} **Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

^{xxix} **1 Corinthians 15:31 (ESV)**

³¹ I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!