

Luke 2:41-52

Christmas vacation is a time of relaxation. No school, time off of work, and different celebrations make this time between Christmas and New Year's Eve a classic time for families to enjoy some sort of vacation time. Vacation for some means a change of venue and a drive out of town. For others vacation might simply mean lounging around the house for a few days. For the die-hards among us, vacation means a time to finish the projects which were not getting done in the busyness leading up to Christmas. Vacations are good things. Did you know Jesus and his parents took a family vacation? Every year at the time of the Passover celebration, Jesus and his family traveled to Jerusalem, taking a vacation of sorts. We have it before us in Luke. The words of Luke are a unique account because from the time Jesus was eight days old until the time he was 30, we only have one recorded account—it's the one before us today from Luke.

Treasure this vacation forever! 1. Recognize Jesus' growth, and 2. Remember Jesus' goal.

1. Recognize Jesus' growth!

I have yet to experience this with my own young family, but wise men have told me that sometimes parents need to take a vacation after taking a vacation. A road trip with a car full of excitable, anxious, and outspoken children can take its toll on even the most patient parents. I imagine that Mary and Joseph may have wanted to take a vacation, after taking a vacation to Jerusalem. They took Jesus to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast as was the custom. God had set the custom in the Law he gave to Moses. Mary and Joseph dutifully followed what God had commanded, except when Jesus was twelve years old, things definitely did not go according to the custom. Their simple family vacation and pilgrimage to Jerusalem turned out to be one of the most anxious moments recorded in Scripture.

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus had celebrated the seven days of the Passover feast in Jerusalem and had been refreshed by the worship at the Temple. But every good vacation must come to an end sometime. They all packed their bags and hit the road—or at least, that's what Mary and Joseph thought was going on. They thought Jesus was in their company, and so they traveled for an entire day. But that evening when they stopped they didn't find Jesus. They asked their relatives; they searched among the friends; but no Jesus. They had lost their son! They had lost the Savior of the world!

So, Mary and Joseph rushed back to Jerusalem and after three days, they found Jesus sitting among the teachers. He was listening and asking questions. He was amazing everyone who heard him. Even Mary and Joseph were astonished by his actions because they had searched so anxiously for him and here he was, sitting in the Temple! Jesus instantly made his obedience clear to his parents and he joined them on the trip back to Nazareth. Luke tells us, "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

Have you ever lost a child? Family vacations can quickly turn into rescue missions when a young child is lost. The thought of a helpless child wandering aimlessly can scare almost anyone. Such an experience is petrifying, even to those among us without kids. But for most of us a much more common occurrence is probably the experience of "abrupt absence". Imagine you are walking and talking with a friend. You might be shopping (hitting the after Christmas sales) or you might be making your way from the parking lot into a ball-game. Suddenly your friend is no longer by your side. You've been jabbering away—but your friend is gone. This is "abrupt absence" and I think we've all experienced some form of it.

The sins in our lives can create "abrupt absences" from our God. Sin does not bring us closer to God—it only takes us away from him. Left unchecked and unaddressed sin threatens to pull us further down the path away from Jesus. We can think Jesus is right along with us, as we

traveling in this life, but suddenly we may find ourselves miles away from our God. We are the ones who disappear suddenly from the Savior's side. The warning signs of "abrupt absence" from God are there in our lives. Hurting marriages, angry conversations, disobeying parents, short tempers, discontent with my place in life, and apathy toward worship here at church are just some of the signs that we are not walking closely with the Savior. We need to constantly turn and look for Jesus. He alone will put our lives on the right path. He alone is the solution for our problems.

When we are feeling the pain of "abrupt absence" and the realization that our sins separate us from God, what should we do? What will we do?!? **Treasure Jesus' humanity.** Look to the boy Jesus, just 12 years old, going up to Jerusalem. Jesus grew up like any ordinary Jewish boy. He grew in wisdom and physical stature. He's a human being just like you and me. Jesus shared in our humanity. He came to this earth and wrapped himself in human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. By God's power, Jesus was true man, born for us. That means he knows what it's like to live in our world. The writer to the Hebrews said, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). He knows our hurts and feels our need. Treasure **his humanity** because he has been made like us in every way—yet he was without sin. His perfect earthly life is your guarantee in God's sight. He gives you the guarantee that God will love you forever and welcome you back, no matter what the "abrupt absence" might be! We have the guarantee that Jesus makes us members of his family. **Treasure this vacation forever!** By trusting in Jesus, you and I have the same perfect record in God's sight.

2. Remember Jesus' goal.

Twelve years is an extremely short time in the history of the world. But consider what has happened in the last twelve years in your life. How has your world changed in twelve years? It may be a short time, but a great deal can happen in a short time. Mary and Joseph probably experienced the same phenomenon with the Lord Jesus. It had been twelve years since the shepherds came to that stable in Bethlehem. The distant memory of the angel Gabriel appearing to both Joseph and Mary may have faded. Life in Nazareth could have easily clouded the crystal clear message about Jesus. Life for us can easily cloud our picture of the Savior, so as we **treasure this vacation, let's REMEMBER Jesus' goal.**

As Jesus sat in the Temple, he was listening and asking questions from teachers who were there. This seemingly normal exercise was anything but normal. His answers and his understanding amazed everyone who heard him. When Mary and Joseph found him they were amazed too. Mary said, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you?" Jesus was surprised that Mary and Joseph didn't know better. "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Other translations of the Bible put it this way: "Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?" Jesus followed his earthly relationship with his parents perfectly, but he also knew the special relationship he had with God. God is his Father in a unique way. No one else shares that same special connection because Jesus is the only man who is also true God. Jesus had the Father's business in mind all his life. **Remember Jesus' goal!** The Father had sent Jesus to rescue the world, to seek and to save what was lost. Christ was amazed that his mother could forget that truth after everything that happened surrounding his birth. But sometimes we need reminders; we need to know the Lord cares.

Dr. John Rosen, a psychiatrist in New York City, was well known for his work with catatonic schizophrenics. Normally doctors remain separate and aloof from their patients. Dr.

Rosen moved into the ward with them. He placed his bed among their beds. He lived the life they had to live. Day to day, he shared it. He loved them. If they didn't talk, he didn't talk. It was as if he understood what was happening. His being there, being with them, communicated something that these schizophrenics hadn't experienced in years—*somebody cares*. But then he did something else. He put his arms around them and hugged them. He held these unattractive, unlovable, sometimes uncontrollable persons, and he loved them back to life. Often, the first words they spoke were simply, "Thank you."

Jesus is true God who has come to help us. If he was only a man, we would have no hope for rescue. We would be lost forever without his search for us and his obedience to the Father's business. **Remember his goal!** This simple twelve year old from the back-water town of Nazareth was no ordinary child. He may have grown up like an ordinary human, but he never stopped being God himself—the all knowing, all powerful Creator of the Universe. He entered human history to give us an eternal hug. To assure us, *somebody cares!* God the Almighty cares for you. The humble and the miraculous are placed side by side in the family vacation of the Lord Jesus. God asked questions and grew in wisdom and stature. The Son of Man obeyed his parents perfectly for us. And so, in Jesus you and I experience another phenomenon. I'd call it "persistent presence". Jesus promises never to leave us or forsake us. Jesus promises never to lose us because that is the Father's business: to seek and to save us! He makes us his own dear brothers and sisters. His "persistent presence" will keep us by his side forever.

Whether or not you take a vacation during this time of the year, **treasure Jesus' vacation for you**. Everything he did in life was directed at our salvation, both his growth and his goal are directed at you. He lived perfectly and by the sacrifice of his innocent life he gained heaven for us. Here's the most amazing Christmas gift—here's the amazing God-man. AMEN.

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