

## **My Father, Your Father**

### **December 26, 2021**

I want to read a passage of scripture. We continue in our story of the early life of Christ. This is taken from Luke, chapter 2, beginning with verse 41.

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was 12 years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he said. "Didn't you know that I had to be in my father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them, and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

May God bless the reading of His Word.

I grew up in a military home. So, the concept of chain of command and obedience I learned with my mother's milk, and that was the way of life for us as well as the way of life for me. I have noted though, through the years, that obedience comes easier to some people than others. A funny story happened just as we were coming in today, as I'm improvising now, obviously. But as we were coming in, somebody asked me what I was preaching on today and I said, "Obedience," and my wife said, "If I had known that, I'd have stayed home." Like I said, obedience comes easier to some than others! There's a case study in my own family. I have two cousins that were reared in the same home, by the same parents, under the same circumstances. They're 18 months difference in age. One of them, their parents could just suggest that he might possibly do something and it was done, just like that. Done. The other one, they would command not to do something or to do something, and you could look in his eyes and you could see the wheels spinning. He was calculating whether or not it was worth the punishment to do whatever it was or not.

We are here today because we have been blessed by the obedience of Mary and Joseph and others. We have been blessed by the saints through the years who have listened carefully to the Holy Spirit and were obedient. We are here in this beautiful sanctuary, in this phenomenal facility with great potential, because of the obedience of those who came before us. If this church prospers in the coming year, if we grow in the new year, it will be because of our obedience. And if it doesn't, it ain't God's fault! Right?

I want to start with the story of the early life of Christ, where we left off on Christmas Eve. When we left off on Christmas Eve, the shepherds were returning from Bethlehem

rejoicing and praising God because they found everything exactly the way they had been told. Now, here's the rest of the story, and I have been trying to avoid this but God will not let me avoid it. I am about to ruin most of the Christmas plays you have seen through the years. The wise men did not arrive the night that Jesus was born. He was probably a year to a year and a half old when they got there. And by the way, there's nowhere in the Bible it says they were wise men. And there's nowhere in the Bible it says they were kings. And there's nowhere in the Bible it says there were three of them. They brought three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold is the gift for a king, frankincense is a gift for the high priest and myrrh is an embalming substance. These were all representative of who Christ was: king, priest and sacrifice. When the Magi came, they went to Herod and said, "Where is he who was born King of the Jews?" He said, "Well, I don't know," and he called the teachers of the law. He said, "Now, where's the king supposed to be born?" They said, "In Bethlehem." And Herod told the Magi, "Now, go look for him and when you find him, why don't you come and tell me?" Being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they went home another way. Because of their obedience, Jesus' life was spared. But knowing that he had been tricked by the Magi, Herod ordered that all of the male children two years of age and under in Bethlehem, and all of the surrounding area, be killed. Before he could carry that out, God appeared with an angel in a dream to Joseph and said, "Take the child and flee." And immediately he obeyed God and fled to Egypt, where Jesus spent the first years of his life as a refugee. When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph again in a dream, and said, "Those who wanted to kill the child have died. Take the child and go home," and he obeyed and went back. But once he got back home, he found out that one of Herod's relatives was ruling over Judea and so he moved the family to Galilee, to town of Nazareth, probably when Jesus was eight or nine years old.

This is where we pick up our story. In our story, they are going to the Passover Feast, which was their custom. They went traveling together with family and friends for entertainment purposes, to share resources, and also for protection. They go to the Passover, and they're on their way home. Now, there's some telling tales here. Jesus is 12. Before the age of 12, boy children traveled with their mother. After the age of 12, they traveled with their father. Jesus had just turned 12. So, they're on their way home, traveling with friends and relatives. They travel a day out of Jerusalem. When they find out, they begin looking for Jesus. And Joseph says to Mary, "Mary, where's Jesus? I thought he was with you." "Well, Joseph, Jesus is 12 now. I thought he was with you." And it dawns on them that they have lost Jesus. "We have lost God's Son!" And they went back and they began to search for him and they searched for him for three days. I cannot imagine their angst. I cannot imagine their fear. I cannot imagine how horrified they were not to be able to find Jesus for three days. They finally find Him in the temple sitting with the teachers of the law, listening to them, asking questions and giving answers. And everybody who heard him was absolutely astonished, except for Mary. She was not amused. And she said, "Son," and I want you listen to what she says. She said, "Son, why have you treated your father and I like this? Didn't you know we've been searching you for three days?" Pause here for just a moment. One of the things to remember is that Jesus came as a human being, experienced life as you and I experienced it. Jesus was a 12-year-old boy. His response to his mother was, "Mom, why were you worried? I've only been gone three days. Didn't you know that I had to be

in my Father's house?" The rest of the scene is skipped. All we know is that the next scene in the Scripture is: he went home with them and was obedient to them and grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and humanity. Because of his obedience, he grew in wisdom and in favor with God and humanity. And if obedience was important to Jesus Christ, do you think it might be important to us?

If this church prospers and grows in the coming year, it will be because of our obedience. If we individually or collectively grow and prosper in the coming year, it will be because of our obedience. I want to read another passage of scripture. This was taken from the book of John, chapter 14. I'll be beginning with verse 15. This is Jesus speaking, talking about obedience. He says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Then Judas (not Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching."

For Jesus, love wasn't a sentiment or an emotion, it was an action. Jesus said, "The test of love is action. It is obedience." The word used for love in Greek is agape. It has very little to do with emotion. You may experience emotion, but it is a matter of will. It is a matter of decision. It is a matter of action. I will love you. Too often (now you think about this) too often we have experienced others who have proclaimed their undying love, but their actions were anything but loving. Right? We've all experienced that. True love can be very, very difficult. I want to look up at the balcony now because there's only a few people in the balcony. I'm not talking to y'all, but some of y'all are hard to love. More than that, sometimes it's hard determining what the loving thing to do is, is it not? There's a fine line between doing the loving thing and enabling. A fine line. Jesus knew this. Jesus knew that some of us struggle with being obedient. Some of us struggle with loving other folks. Some of us struggle with knowing what the loving thing to do is. And so he said, "I will not leave you as orphans but I will send another to be with you." We call the other, the Holy Spirit. The word that is used in Greek is parakletos. There's no English word that is an equivalent. It means helper, comforter, counselor, guide, partner, encourager, and more. Do you know what the closest English word is? This is going to surprise you: lawyer! Lawyer; someone called in alongside to help, encourage, comfort, guide, and partner with. We do not have to love alone. The Holy Spirit is our help. There is, however, a major secret in following the Holy Spirit. Most often, the Holy Spirit does not speak in a very loud voice. Now, sometimes he'll break out the two by four, but most of the time not. Most of the time we have to be very quiet, we have to be still, we have to pay attention. The secret to hearing the Spirit, so that we can obey the Spirit, is to shut up. And that, in and of itself, is hard for some of us. I don't know about your life, but my life is relatively hectic. I've got a lot going on. Can you relate to that?

My life is far too hectic, my life is far too busy not to shut up, to be still and to be quiet so that I can hear.

What do you need to help you be obedient? It may be that you need to be quiet, that you need to be still, so that you might hear. If this church is going to prosper, if this church is going to grow, if we are going to prosper spiritually and grow in the new year, it is going to be because of obedience. And if we're going to obey, we must begin by listening. So, as we begin or look forward to this new year, this "tweener" Sunday between Christmas and New Year's, I want to give you a gift. The gift I want to give you is the gift of silence, an opportunity to listen, an opportunity to hear God speaking to you. Now, there is going to be a tendency for your mind to wander and you're gonna say, "I wonder what God is saying to Jeannine." I'm using her as an example, not one of you. Don't worry about what God is saying to her or to the person next to you. You listen to what God is saying to you. Let's pray.

Lord, Your children are listening. Speak. And, Lord, as we face a new year, help us to spend more than a minute listening. And, Lord, help us to be obedient. In Thy name we pray. Amen.