

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, February 3, 2019

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 132 (38:4) 133, 629,625

Lessons: Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Romans 10:12-21, John 1:35-51

Sermon Text: Luke 2:41-52

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Remember that the word Epiphany means manifestation. Jesus was manifested as the Savior of the world when the angel announced his birth to the shepherds near Bethlehem. Jesus was manifested as the King of Israel and the Savior also of the Gentile nations when the wise men from east came to worship him. Today we want to learn:

HOW JESUS MANIFESTED HIMSELF

- 1. By his words;**
- 2. By his deeds.**

We read in our text: *“Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.”*

Every Jewish man was expected to attend three main festivals in Jerusalem according to the Law God had given through Moses. Moses told the people: *“Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles,”* Deut. 16:16. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, also called the Passover, was the most important of the three festivals. It was celebrated in memory of the time in Egypt when the Israelites were slaves and the Lord delivered them. In Egypt they followed the instructions of the Lord and put the blood of a sacrificed lamb on the sides and top of the doorframe of their houses. When every firstborn of both men and animals was struck dead in Egypt, the Israelites were spared. The angel of death passed over their houses when he saw the blood of the lamb on the door frames. When we hear of this we should remember John the Baptist’s words: *“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,”* John 1:29.

We are told that Jesus, when he was twelve years old, went with Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem from Nazareth to observe the Passover Festival. When a Jewish boy reached the age of twelve, he became what is called “a son of the Law.” After having been instructed in the Scriptures prior to this time, the Jewish boy at this age was pledged to the Law as a whole and was made personally responsible in religious matters. According to the Law of Moses, Jesus was now required to attend the three festivals we mentioned earlier. But we should not think that Jesus went to Jerusalem to attend festivals simply because the Law required this. As the holy Son of God he wanted to obey his heavenly Father. This should remind us that we should go to church, not only on festivals, but regularly in obedience to the Third Commandment. Luther explains in our Catechism: “We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.” We should do this “gladly” for in God’s Word we hear the Gospel of Christ and find rest for our souls.

Our text says: *“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 looking for him among their relatives and friends.”* Joseph and Mary were not in the least disturbed about the fact that Jesus was not with them at the start of the journey home. They had learned to

put their trust in their Son who never caused them any problem. As the Son of God he always obeyed them perfectly.

Then after traveling a day (about 15-20 miles), they began to wonder where Jesus was, expecting him to camp with them for the night. They inquired among their relatives and friends, but no one had seen him. They then had to turn back to Jerusalem. ***“After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”*** Two days were taken up in traveling, and then on the third day they found Jesus in the temple. He was in one of the rooms of the temple where the rabbis gave instruction. Jesus was both listening and asking questions about the Scriptures. ***“Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”*** They were amazed at how well acquainted Jesus was with the Scriptures. By his questions he showed remarkable understanding and deep knowledge. The mind of Jesus was filled with heavenly wisdom.

“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.’” We can understand that Joseph and Mary would be concerned about their young Son, but Jesus was not at fault.

Here now, we learn how Jesus manifested himself by his words: ***“‘Why were you searching for me?’ he asked. ‘Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?’”*** These are the first recorded words of Jesus in the Gospels. By these words Jesus manifested himself as the Son of his heavenly Father. Jesus expressed surprise at the words of his mother. It would not have been difficult to find him, had they understood that he had to be in his Father’s house, the temple.

Jesus’ words to his mother are the most important words of our text. They reveal that Jesus knew that he was not simply the son of Joseph the carpenter. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin Mary. Joseph was the legal father of Jesus, his foster father. We should recall what the Gospel of Matthew tells us. ***“His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit,”*** Matt. 1:18. This also was told to Joseph by an angel of the Lord: ***“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins,”*** Matt. 1:20-21.

When Jesus in our text speaks of God as his heavenly Father, he is manifesting himself as none other than the Son of God. Throughout the four Gospels Jesus always speaks of God as ***“My Father,”*** the one who sent him to this earth to redeem sinners. When the Pharisees challenged Jesus saying that his testimony was not valid, Jesus replied: ***“I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the one who sent me - the Father,”*** John 8:18. When the Jews said he was demon-possessed, Jesus said: ***“I am not possessed by a demon, but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.” ...“If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.”*** John 8:49,54. When Jesus cleansed the temple which had been turned into a market place, we are told: ***“To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!’”*** John 2:16.

This is such an important truth for us to remember because the majority of people in this world do not accept Jesus as the Son of God, but merely as a good man or a great prophet. The Muslims, for example, of whom we hear so much in these days, consider Jesus simply as a good man and prophet, but Mohammed they consider the greatest of all prophets. They are opposed to the Gospel which teaches Jesus to be the Son of God who died for the sins of the world. We should, therefore, fortify ourselves with the truth of Scripture which teaches that Jesus is God’s only begotten Son. Jesus said: ***“The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him,”*** John 5:22-23. Peter testified and said to Jesus: ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,”*** Matt. 16:16. The Apostle John writes: ***“Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God,”*** 1 John 5:5. In the same chapter John writes: ***“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true - even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life,”*** 1 John 5:20. If we do not hold to this truth, we have no hope of salvation and eternal life, for the Bible says: ***“God***

has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life,” 1 John 5:11-12.

2.

Now we want to learn how Jesus manifested himself by his deeds.

When Mary and Joseph had come to the temple, Jesus in no way protested and demanded to spend more time there. We are told: ***“Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.”*** Mary didn’t understand all these things, but she remembered all these things and valued them as a precious treasure. Jesus was quick to obey his parents according to the Fourth Commandment. God’s Son humbled Himself by being subject to his parents. He did this for us. Paul writes: ***“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons,”*** Gal. 4:4-5. By being subject to the Law and obedient to his parents, Jesus atoned for all the sins that we have committed also against the Fourth Commandment. He perfectly fulfilled the Law which we have broken endless times by not honoring, serving, and obeying our parents. Jesus humbled himself and lived as a servant for our sakes. Paul writes that ***“he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross,”*** Phil. 2:8.

Finally our text tells us: ***“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”*** Jesus had shown a remarkable degree of wisdom while at the temple in Jerusalem. But he also continued to increase and grow in wisdom. Through the constant study of the Old Testament Scriptures Jesus learned more and more about his heavenly Father’s will and how he was to fulfill it here on earth. Jesus also grew physically as any other child. He developed a strong and healthy body so that he would be prepared for the hard labors of his public ministry later on. It was also natural that as a holy, sinless man Jesus could not but please his heavenly Father. Likewise all the people were pleased who knew him as he lived there at Nazareth, working at his foster father’s trade, as the son of the carpenter. When the people heard him teach later in his ministry they were amazed and said: ***“What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn’t this the carpenter?”*** Mark 6:2-3.

Throughout his earthly ministry Jesus manifested himself as the Son of God. He performed many miracles and in this way showed his divine power which he had as the Son of God. These manifestations of himself are a firm foundation for our faith in Jesus as the Son of God. They make us divinely sure that our Savior is true God, and therefore we trust in him as the Savior of us lost and condemned sinners. Both his words and deeds show us that he is indeed the true Son of God and our Redeemer who made full atonement for our sins.

May we always honor Jesus as the Son of God, put our trust in him for salvation, and say to him:

“In Thee all fulness dwelleth,
All grace and pow’r divine;
The glory that excelleth,
O Son of God, is Thine.
We worship Thee, we bless Thee,
To Thee, O Christ, we sing;
We praise Thee and confess Thee
Our glorious Lord and King.” Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 352:3)

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