

Luke 2:41-47

41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

The Gospel of Luke shows the significance of who Jesus is. The gospel writers reveal that Jesus is the real deal, the Christ, and the Son of God. They don't just proclaim it, they each provide their testimony. Luke reveals that ever since his childhood, Jesus was significantly different from the rest of the world around him.

Jesus comes from a devoted family. We know this because every year they traveled several days to get to Jerusalem for this major festival. Passover was the most important festival. It celebrates freedom, divine intervention, and being God's chosen people. They traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate, praise God, and study the scriptures. The trip to the temple was a special event. Everybody did their duty. Everybody did what was required and expected. When it was time to go home, the caravan departs, and life gets back to normal. However, Jesus is unique, with special interest and devotion. For him, the trip to the temple was not just an annual celebration. It meant a lot more to Jesus while for everyone else it was just a matter of getting back to life as normal.

This reminds me of baptisms today. People go through the rite of passage, they make a confession of faith, pledge their lives to Christ, go through the ritual of baptism, and then go back to life as normal with little if any change in the individual. However, Jesus didn't just stay in the temple for three days, he stayed for the weeklong festival plus three more days. I think he probably would have stayed longer if his family did not come back for him. Luke shows us that Jesus is a very special person from the birth narrative, into his childhood, throughout his ministry, and especially his death. Here in the temple, it is just like in his adulthood, all who heard him were amazed. The contemporary lesson for us is to learn as much as we can from Jesus. Don't take God for granted. Don't take the word of God for granted. Don't take the temple for granted. Mainstream society wears the Christian faith on its sleeve instead of actually following Jesus. People today will pledge their lives to following Jesus only to go back to life as normal with minimal devotion and little to no change.

Follow Jesus from the example from his childhood where his desire was to be in the temple and study the word. Follow Jesus as a disciple, not like the rest of the crowd that wanted something from him and never took the time to understand who he really is. Follow Jesus as he resists temptation and stands up to the devil with strong faith. Follow Jesus as a disciple. Learn as much as you can from him. Follow his lessons to the best of your ability. The very best lessons we have ever received come from Jesus. I was recently engaged in a conversation with our regional minister and he asked me about my favorite

scripture. I also like to ask people that, it is good for conversation, and good for understanding. It didn't take long for me to answer. I have two. Matthew chapter 25 provides a hard lesson on judgment day when the Lord separates the faithful. He does not separate the faithful from evil; he separates the faithful from those who fail to respond to faith and follow his lessons. "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:37-40). Luke chapter 6 provides a hard lesson on love. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:27-28).

Unfortunately in our society there are many people that confess that they believe but they do not actually follow Jesus. Learn from the lessons that Jesus taught and emulate his behavior. Follow Jesus to the temple. Follow Jesus on the hard lessons. Follow Jesus all of your life with all of your heart, mind, and soul.