

The main emphasis of Jesus' appearance in the Temple when He was 12 is to teach us about Him, who this young Child is. Luke records this for us because we are to know that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity has not become a Man in order to visit earth for His own amusement. He is utterly unlike the pagan gods who come to the realm of men to play and have fun, to use and abuse men, treating them as toys or objects to satisfy their lusts or win wagers with one another. The Son of God is here on His Father's business, as one of His Father's sacrificial things. Despite the fact that He has humbled Himself and does not always and fully His divine attributes as a man, already at the age of twelve He knows what He is to be about, what He is for, and how His Father will use Him.

This knowledge might have come by a partial exercise of His divine powers, that, as omniscient God, He knows the plan, knows where things are going. He does, as a man, know things that He can only know because He is God, having perfect knowledge and sight of the mind and heart. He does know where His life must lead, where His life must be given up for the life of the world.

But it is just as possible that as a true human being, not always using His divine knowledge, His grasp of these things in time as a man came about from a careful reading of Holy Scripture and from seeing the Temple in action. Unhindered by sin and selfishness, Jesus could more easily understand God's Word as given by the prophets. He wasn't hung up on trying to excuse Himself or find an easy way that didn't involve blood or sacrifice. He is there at the Passover feast, celebrating the deliverance of Israel from slavery through the shed blood of the lamb and the eating of its flesh, the sparing of Israel's firstborn by the death of the unblemished lamb, a hearkening back to father Abraham's words to Isaac, that God would provide for Himself the lamb for the offering, and that Isaac's life was spared not by a lamb that day, but by a ram, and so the lamb was yet to be given. And He, unencumbered by sin, gets what it is all about.

And it is fascinating to me that it is also Luke's Gospel that records for us Jesus' words in the Upper Room, twenty-one years to the same occasion later, He says to the disciples that He has been longing to celebrate that Passover with them. It is a delightful thought that it was here, as a 12 year old boy, that it all clicks for Him, that it is not just at some point in those three years, but from here, that He knows and so looks forward to when He will accomplish and fulfill all these things in Himself.

We are also shown much about our Lord and taught by the fact that He suffers from imperfect, less than all-wise parents, and also that He loves them and they love Him. They are imperfect. They sin based on their own selfishness, but they are not abusive. Mary and Joseph neglected Jesus and left Him behind. We parents are not always as attentive as we should be. And when Mary finally finds Him she not only exposes her forgetfulness of His mission, which He expects she should have known, but she also lashes out at Him, blaming Him for her and Joseph's pain.

His response demonstrates a higher allegiance to His heavenly Father and His mission than to Mary and Joseph, but the two relationships are not in competition. He does not use their real sin and failure as an excuse to dishonor and have no use for. The God of the 1st commandment is also the Giver of the 4th. Jesus is obedient to Mary and Joseph. They are His real, albeit imperfect, parents. Through them His Father provides for Him. It was they who rightly taught Him the Law and brought Him to Jerusalem for Passover.

Through them, imperfect to be sure, but knowledgeable as any parent is, they, through their godliness, their teaching, their prizing the things of the God of Israel, Jesus does manage to grow in stature and knowledge. This is recorded to comfort us. Our parents weren't perfect and neither are we. One of our parents may indeed have abandoned us or abused us, and yet through them, not because of their failure or selfishness, but in spite of it, our Father provided for us. He had us baptized. And He continued to provide, even after they were out of the picture. We managed to grow in stature and knowledge and here we are today by grace. The God of the Fourth Commandment blesses us through the people He places around us even though they aren't perfect and neither are we. Love covers a multitude of sin. Grace abounds.

The point here is simply that even though the emphasis here is on Jesus' divine nature and mission, that He was always perfect, without sin, and totally in accord with His Father's will and obedient to His earthly parents, we should not take that to suggest that Jesus isn't a real human being. He is literally the descendent of Abraham and of David through Mary by biology and Joseph through legal descent. He is fully and in every way human, and this is just as necessary and important as His Divine nature.

His human nature makes Him able to keep the Law and to be killed as a sacrifice. It must be a man that dies for sin, for it was man who sinned. That He is fully divine makes that sacrifice enough for every man, woman, and child who was ever conceived or will be conceived and enabled Him to finish that payment on the cross completely and then to rise from the dead.

Seeing our Lord's dedication to His heavenly Father, His hearing the Scriptures and seeing the things of His Father as about Him and the mission for which He was sent, seeing His perfect obedience to Mary and Joseph despite their failures and sins, from all of this, as always, our eyes are drawn to Jesus. St. Mary is a model for our faith. She is far from the immaculate, spotless Mother without any sin that the Roman Church holds her to be. But she is always directed to her Son, and her ear and heart is always open to hear and believe what He has to say and so. Let us do likewise; hear what He has to say, and keep all these things in our hearts.