

First Sunday of Christmas-December 26, 2021
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish
Luke 2:41-52

“Jesus and the Law”

Merry Christmas and grace and peace to you from God our Father and from his son, Jesus Christ who was born to save you. Amen

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

*The first two parts of this verse from Galatian’s sound like the Christmas story. **When the time had fully come** sounds like when Joseph is desperately pounding on the doors of every inn and home in Bethlehem after Mary had told him that her water had broken, and the time had fully come. Joseph wouldn’t have fared well with most wives of today. With the technologies that we have today, I could imagine Mary grilling Joseph if he had called ahead or easier yet gone online to make reservations in Bethlehem so that would have a place to stay. The intensity of the blame to Joseph would likely have increased with Mary’s labor pains as her labor pains intensified. It’s not so unlikely to imagine Mary saying something like, “Joseph you always wait until the last minute for things like this. You knew Bethlehem’s hotels would be booked full of the census that was taking place. This shouldn’t have been a surprise for you, after all an angel told us that I would be giving birth and do the math Joseph, the census and my due date are at the same time and now we have nowhere to stay.”*

*The next part of this verse from Galatians also sounds like the Christmas story, **God sent his Son, born of a woman.** Indeed, God sending his son down from heaven to earth is what Christmas is all about. If you asked someone who had never set foot inside of a church or ever opened the bible the question, “Who was the mother of Jesus?” They most likely would know that Jesus was born of a woman and most likely know that her name was Mary.*

*However, Paul the author of Galatians adds the words, **born under the law.** This part is not something we bring up in our children’s Christmas programs or in our Christmas Eve services. There is no mention of Jesus being a difficult child. There are no verses in scripture telling us that Jesus had his mornings and evenings mixed up and kept Joseph and Mary up all night long. Luke who describes his gospel as the most complete description of the stories of Jesus doesn’t say that Jesus was a terror when he became a two-year-old.*

However, Paul doesn't say that Jesus was above the law. If we had stories of Jesus getting into trouble in school, he wouldn't have talked back to his teacher by saying, "Do you realize who it is that you are accusing of misbehaving?" We know that Jesus, although he was God, was also human and was under the law for one of the same reasons that I know that every single one of you is also under the law. The reason that Jesus was under the law was because like every one of you, Jesus had parents. The commandments given to us by Moses is a short list of laws compared to the laws given by parents to their children. Whenever there is a family, not only is the law evident between parents and their children, but the law is at work between the parents too.

Luke is the only gospel author who chose to include this story of when Jesus seems to have disobeyed the fourth commandment by not honoring his father and his mother. It seems that Luke begins by siding with Joseph and Mary by describing this trip to Jerusalem was not something new. The trip to Jerusalem to the festival wasn't just a favorite vacation that the family had taken like a trip to Yellowstone. The trip to Jerusalem to the Passover was a custom that was not to be broken under any circumstances. Jesus was 12 years old and had gone with his parents every year with them, but for some reason Jesus chose this year to defy his parents by giving the idea to film makers the "Home Alone" Christmas comedy movie series.

This idea of losing children is also in one of my favorite episodes of Everybody Loves Raymond is when Ray and Debra both think they are home watching the kids but meet each other in the grocery store while the kids are left at home unattended. I love it when it seems the Holy Spirit drops obvious sermon illustrations from my personal family experiences. Just a few weeks ago, I saw my son-in-law leave our yard on his side-by-side to inspect the progress on their house. Shortly afterward, I saw my daughter leave the yard in her vehicle. A few minutes later their daughter came down to the shed in our yard where I was working and asked me where her mother and father were. Her parents had a little misunderstanding of who had which kids and this one was left home alone. I have other stories of when Kim and I as young parents might have gone home from places without making sure all of our kids were with us. I won't go into detail in these stories as they might accuse us of bad parenting.

This is what happens to everyone who is under law. First there are accusations that someone is guilty and oftentimes there are excuses given or transferal of blame to others. Jesus was not the first person to encounter the law, nor did it happen only after Moses received the Ten Commandments. A law was first delivered by God the Father to Adam and Even when he told them that they were not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And when the Lord confronted Adam about eating from it, Adam's excuse was that the woman who the Lord had given to him was the problem. Adam not only blamed Eve, but also blamed the Lord for giving

Eve to him who tempted him to sin. The parents of my granddaughter had similar excuses transferring the blame to each other.

In this story of Jesus being under the law, Jesus is accused by his parents of treating them poorly by not following them back home. You know it's never well, when a mother begins a conversation with a child with the words, "Your father and I". Mary was increasing the weight of the law that Jesus was breaking by telling Jesus that it wasn't just her that was worried about where he was, she included Joseph in the accusation without letting him say a word. Rarely is there an episode of Leave it to Beaver when June Cleaver doesn't accuse one of her boys of some wrongdoing by saying, "Your father and I".

This is where the story of 12-year-old Jesus takes a turn. Jesus accuses his parents of their negligence, and we have to wonder what kind of parents would wait until the third day before looking for their missing child. Jesus admits that he was left home alone, but he was in his heavenly father's home in the temple. Jesus might have been breaking the fourth commandment of honoring his parents, but Jesus was keeping the third commandment by resting in the presence of others who were teaching the word of the Lord.

Just like me not wanting to tell you stories of when we might have innocently left our children places, Mary didn't go home and tell this story of her son's misbehaving or her and Joseph's negligence of not knowing where Jesus was for three days. Mary didn't tell this story of finding Jesus amazing the older biblical scholars in the temple with his questions and wisdom. Instead, Mary kept this story to herself and pondered what had taken place.

*She likely pondered what it meant that her son was born of a woman and was born under the law. Mary treasured all these things in her heart for another 20 years. Mary understood what it meant that her son was born under the law when she witnessed her first-born son nailed to a cross. The next verse in Galatians tells us why Jesus was under the law. **In order to redeem those who were under the law.***

*This is in the Christmas story. Jesus was born to be your Savior. Jesus was born under the law to take the weight of the law so that we can no longer be accused of what we have failed to do but are redeemed by what Jesus has done for us. This he has done so that we like Jesus in this story...we too will be left **Home Alone** with our heavenly Father, forever. Amen.*