

“The Passover Child”

Parenting is one of the most important, and most difficult, vocations in the world. Parents want what is best for their children – but that’s often a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the parent doesn’t always know what is best – and on the other hand, they might know what is best, but can’t do anything about it. Add to that the constant struggle of children who don’t always agree with their parents and you have a difficult task indeed.

The last thing you want as parents is for your child to get hurt. You want them to learn from your mistakes. But children grow, and mature – and as they do – they become more and more independent. As the parenting guru John Rosemond would say – the role of parents is to “de-parent” their children – or, as I’ve often said – to get to the point where they can live without you.

Today we hear of the Child Jesus. He’s not your ordinary child, for “the favor of God was upon Him” – and in typical Jesus fashion – He turns everything upside down. He is not the parent, He’s the child – yet, here in our text, He is, in essence – “de-childing” His parents.

Notice where St. Luke starts – with the Passover Feast. Joseph and Mary are faithful, godly parents. They were Ephesians 6:4 parents (which says) – “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

That is what Joseph has been doing. Every year he and Mary went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover – and a part of the celebration of this feast, was catechesis – the father teaching his family what the Passover was all about.

Now, at age 12, Jesus has gone up with His father and mother to the feast – “and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.”

To understand how Jesus “de-childrens” His parents – one must first understand the Feast of the Passover – and that begins in Egypt.

The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years when God sent Moses to deliver them. But even after 9 horrendous plagues were poured out on the Egyptians – Pharaoh would still not let God’s people go.

The last plague that God sent upon the land of Egypt was a plague in which the Angel of Death passed over the land and killed the firstborn male child of man and beast. Death filled the land – but God had promised to spare all those homes marked by the blood of a lamb – He promised that death would Pass-Over them.

Every year since that first Passover, the Israelites would celebrate the feast by shedding the blood of a lamb, and eating the lamb. At the Passover Feast, the father would teach his family, answering the question – “what does [all] this mean?”

The Passover Feast was meant to look back to the Great Deliverance that God had provided their fathers of old – delivering them from their Egyptian enemies, from the bondage of slavery, and from the Angel of Death.

But this Feast was also meant to look forward – to the Greater Deliverance that the Lord had promised – that the Messiah who was to come, would deliver them from their Greater enemies, their Greater bondage, and the Greater death.

Jesus is that Promised Messiah. He is the Lamb of God, the Passover Lamb – whose life is sacrificed, whose blood shed – to cover you and deliver you from sin, death and everlasting damnation.

But here in our text this morning, the time had not yet fully come for the sacrificing of THE Passover Lamb. There are some 20 more Passover Feasts for Jesus to attend – yet, already, He is preparing His parents for that day when their Son will not return home with them from the feast. That day when He will give His life for the life of the world.

Can you imagine what that must have been like for Joseph and Mary? They knew what the Passover Feast was all about. Even before the Birth of Jesus, Mary has been pondering and treasuring all these things in her heart. Every time Joseph called Jesus by name, he was reminded that “Jesus” is the One who will save His people from their sins. Each year, they celebrated the Passover Feast like no others.

Ironically, at this Passover Feast, Jesus is the one teaching “the teachers” in the Temple. Already He is connecting the dots for them – teaching how the Kingdom of God is fulfilled in Him – leading them from the Passover Feast, to His Passover Sacrifice. Jesus is instructing them, and bringing them up in the way of the Lord.

Set before us today is Jesus who is both Child and Lord. He must honor His father and mother – and He does – by being about the business of His heavenly Father. He must be in His Father’s house, doing what His Father desires – for Him to be sacrificed, so that His blood might redeem Joseph & Mary, and the whole world from sin.

There is a lesson here for all of us – for as St. Paul says – we are the “adopted sons” of God who are redeemed through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus.

So that you may “increase in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God” – He gathers you into His house – redeeming you from all sin, setting you free from that which binds you, and giving you the very life of the God-man Jesus.

Dearly beloved, don’t let anything keep you from being in your Father’s house – as your Savior Jesus Christ delivers the gifts He has purchased for you with His own blood. Sit at the feet of Jesus who instructs you in what His death means – how His blood covers you and makes death pass over you – even as He, the Resurrected Christ, leads you in the way of life everlasting.

Come and feast with Him – or, if you are not able to come to church, I will bring church to you – so that you may hear the good news of the Savior born for you – so that you may receive the very Body and Blood that Jesus has given and shed for you – so that His blood might mark you, and death Pass-Over you.

Blessed are you, dear children of God – for He has redeemed you – and He has come that you may have life – now, in these days, and for all eternity. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.