

People of God, during this Christmas season you may have watched the movie Home Alone. In this movie the McCalister family is going on Christmas vacation, and in the hustle and bustle of getting ready to leave, the parent did not realize that they had left their son Kevin home alone. It is not until they are on the plane that the mother realizes this, and she quickly puts an end to the vacation at does everything in her power to get back to her son. The rest of the movie is filled with hilarity as Kevin puts a stop to the Wet Bandits who are trying to break into his house.

Have you ever lost a child? Even just for a moment? You look around and your heart sinks into your stomach and your worse fears flash before your eyes. Where did my child go? Well then you could imagine what Mary and Joseph experienced when they lost Jesus in Jerusalem during the Passover.

The caravan of pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover was now heading back to Nazareth, and Mary and Joseph assumed that Jesus had come along with them. And why would he not have? He is the perfect child. Always on time for dinner, always being where he was supposed to be, always doing what his parents told him to do. Obedient and respectful in every way imaginable. With a child like that it is easy to go into cruise control and think, well, this child has a good head on his shoulders, I don't need to do the helicopter mom thing with him. He knows what is expected of him, and he always does it.

So when it was time for the caravan to leave, they just assumed Jesus was with them in the group with the other relatives and the people of the village. But after they travel a day back toward Nazareth, Mary and Joseph realize that Jesus is not with the family at all, and he is lost.

And so they travel back to Jerusalem in search of Jesus. When they get there, it apparently took them a whole other day to find him, because it

says they found him after three days. Interestingly that is how long Kevin McCalister was left Home Alone also.

But even more interesting is that this three days is a foreshadowing of the three days Jesus will be lost to the world after he dies on the cross, during another Passover celebration in Jerusalem, 21 years later.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers of the law, listening to them and asking them questions, such that they were all amazed at his understanding and answers. And his parents were likewise astonished. Jesus wasn't in trouble, he wasn't in danger, he wasn't hurt or hungry and cold, he wasn't taken by a pack of bandits and sold into slavery. Jesus was in the temple, teaching the teachers of the law, at 12 years old.

Mary said to Him, "*Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching in great distress.*" Indicating they were looking everywhere for him, throughout all of Jerusalem. But while Mary is looking for an apology, Jesus reminds her something else.

Mary says, "*Your father* and I have been searching for you," and, you can almost picture it, Jesus makes perfect eye contact with his mother and gives a little bit of an inflection in his voice "*Did you not know that I must be in MY Father's house?*" Which of course brings back to her remembrance what the angel told her, that he was the Son of God.

Now this was no slight against Joseph. But it was a reaffirmation of who exactly Mary's son was, and what he had been destined to do. He was not Joseph's son, he was the Son of God, and in no way was he disobedient to His parents if he was obedient to His Father, and was found in his house.

And since this was so, and knowing that Jesus, being the obedient child he was, why were they looking for him any where else except the Temple? Where else would Jesus be, except, where an obedient Son would be, in

his father's house? They should have known he would be in the temple. But his parents did not understand what this meant.

Neither did the other Mary's understand the meaning of the empty tomb when Jesus was once again not found where they thought he was supposed to be. But the words of the angel made things clear as they remembered the words Jesus spoke to them about how he was to be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.

Well, from there, Jesus went back with his parents to Nazareth, and as he had done since his birth, he continued to grow in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

What are we to learn from this story?

In this last verse, Luke says, "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*" This is a direct quote from 1 Samuel 2:26, about the young boy Samuel, who would become a prophet and judge in Israel. Samuel was born to a woman named Hannah, who sang a song that is similar to Mary's Magnificat. Here we can see that just as Samuel was a type of Christ, and his mother Hannah was a type of Mary.

Hannah, like Mary had a miraculous birth to Samuel, in a way. Like many of the holy matriarchs of the Faith, Hannah was barren and could not conceive until the Lord opened her womb. The child Samuel who was conceived by Hannah was given by his mother to serve the Lord in the temple. And so, perhaps Jesus himself picks up on this similarity, and implies to His mother that like Samuel, he was to be in the temple serving the Lord.

Besides being a greater Samuel, Jesus is found to be the incarnation of the wisdom of Solomon here. Whenever you hear the word wisdom in the

context of the bible, how could one not think of King Solomon. And Jesus as a boy grew in wisdom.

There are many theories about what Jesus' childhood was like growing up, and there are apparently even some gnostic gospels that invent stories of Jesus as a child. But we really do not need to look beyond what is given us in this passage here to learn all we need to about Jesus' childhood experience.

From the time Mary came to the Temple for her purification after Jesus was born, until 12 years of age, it says, "*And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.*" Then, from the time of this incident in Jerusalem, at 12 years of age until he is baptized at age 30, all we have about Jesus' life is: "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*"

What does this tell us about our Lord? It tells us that our Lord's formative years took place in home, around his earthly father and mother, being obedient to them in all things. Proverbs 13:1 tells us that "*A wise son hears his father's instructions,*" and Proverbs 1:8 says, "*hear my son your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching.*" This is the wisdom of that Christ grew up into, which prepared him for his mission as the Messiah.

Now this of course does not mean that all of us who likewise grow up obeying our father and mother will be the messiah some day. Of course. Not. There is only one savior.

But what this does tell is that Jesus in his humanity is not all that different from us, except of course he was without sin. But he had to grow up in wisdom by learning to obey. And that is where true wisdom is found, children. True wisdom is found in obedience to your father and mother. Wisdom and maturity is found by constant practice of discerning good and evil. But this discerning is meant to be from the perspective of obeying the good and observing the consequences of evil from a far. God

does not intend or desire his children to mature and grow in wisdom by doing evil. You do not need to experience running out into traffic and getting hit by a car to know that this is a bad thing.

This is why the fifth commandment is the first commandment with a promise – *“Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you, and that your days may long in the land.”*

Obedience to your parent’s instructions and teachings and warnings and discipline, will guide you into the ways of life. And like Jesus you too will grow in stature and strength and wisdom, and in favor with God and man. But disobeying your parents and trying to forge your own way in the world, and trying to learn wisdom through rebellion will only bring unending heartache. *Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Now this wisdom that Christ grew in also tells us Mom’s and Dad’s something. It tells us what was important to Mary and Joseph in their upbringing and education of Jesus, and what should also be important to us.

First of all, at age 12 Jesus knew enough Scripture to be able to converse with the Teachers of the Law. Now you might think that because Jesus is the Son of God, that he possesses this divine knowledge without anyone teaching him. I don’t think that is necessarily the truth. I think Jesus learned just like we did. He was human too, you know. And Mary sat Jesus on her knee, and Joseph instructed him at the table, line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept. He was instructed also in the synagogue as well of course. But we know that the center of our Lord’s education was in the Scriptures. Mom’s and Dad’s, are you teaching your children the Scriptures as the backbone of their education? Or is Bible just thrown in the curriculum as something you add on?

Along with training in the Scriptures, Jesus' parents also raised him in a healthy observance of tradition as well.

Luke says, "*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.*" The Greek word for custom, is the word Ethos. Ethos is the basis for the word Ethic, and so it has the idea of moral character. But it also implies moral character that is derived through the continual use of habits and traditions and rituals. It is no surprise that the things you do over and over and over again shape your moral character.

So it was the custom, the ethos of Mary and Joseph, to keep the tradition of observing the liturgical calendar and attending the Feast of Passover in Jerusalem every year. These things are what Jews did. God had commanded that Israel do this as an annual remembrance of the Exodus story. By observing this tradition it also provided opportunity for families to talk about the Scriptures and the meaning of why these things were done. But it also gave the people of Israel an identity of who they are.

As Tevya says in *Fiddler on the Roof*, "*Because of our traditions, everyone of us knows who he is, and what God expects him to do.*" Everyone knows who they themselves are, and they know what God expects him to do. If there ever were an age and ever a people who had no idea who they were or what God expected of them, it is Americans in twenty first century.

It is good for our children to be brought up the traditions of the church, to observe the liturgical calendar, to keep the feasts and fasts, because these things shape us. They tell us who we really are, and they tell us what God expects of us. They are the foundations of our ethos as a Christian people.

So we can see here that Scripture and tradition were the bedrock of Christ's upbringing and training and preparation for him to fulfill His

mission as the Messiah. And as Parents of our children, we can do no better if we seek to have faithful children who will model Christ likeness.

Psalm 78 says:

*Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!*

²*I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,*

³*things that we have heard and known,
that our fathers have told us.*

⁴*We will not hide them from their children,
but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.*

⁵*He established a testimony in Jacob
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers
to teach to their children,*

⁶*that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and arise and tell them to their children,*

⁷*so that they should set their hope in God
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;*

⁸*and that they should not be like their fathers,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

The Lord of the universe had the best education in the world. It was not under the tutelage of the greatest rabbis. It was not studying the philosophies of the great thinkers. The Lord Jesus, was equipped to fulfill

his mission and role as the Messiah, by sitting at his mother's knee and learning the scriptures, learning how to read and write, and most likely, learning how to use hand tools from his father and be helpful around the house, and observing the traditions of the church – this is the education of the Son of God. We can do no better for our children today. Our faith needs to have a form to it, as well as content. All too often in Evangelicalism the Christian faith is reduced to mere ideology, what you think.

"Being a disciple of Jesus is not primarily a matter of getting the right ideas and doctrines and beliefs into your head in order to guarantee proper behavior..."

Our faith, if it is to model the faith of Jesus, and if we are to live as he lived, it needs to be formed by habits and traditions and customs that are incarnated in our lives over time. This is one of the reasons why Christians have our own calendar. To help us be formed by the story of Jesus. We are all being formed by something. And ideas alone will only go so far. It is what we do with those ideas and how we incarnate them into our daily lives and schedules and calendars that will keep us from getting lost, so that we too would be found faithful in our fathers house of this world, as Jesus was. Amen.