

Children's Sermon

I'm always excited for this time of year. I love it because it is a time for new beginnings. It's a new school year. It's a new season for fall sports. You've spent all summer with your family, and now you get to go and spend time with your friends. You get to start up with Sunday School again...It's a great time. What are you excited for?

Ms. Albright read us a story about Jesus when he was a boy today. I don't know if you know but this is the only story about Jesus as a boy in the Gospels. Usually the stories about Jesus talk about the rest of his life.

When I was younger I always liked this story, because it was closer to me. Most of the other stories that we hear about Jesus, he is an adult. We follow him through his teachings, death, and rebirth. I didn't feel like this applied to me because I was 12. It was good to learn, but my perspective wasn't the same.

The story begins with Jesus traveling with his family to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. This is a big festival for the Jewish people celebrating when they were freed slaves from Egypt. At the end of the festival, Jesus' parents start to go home. They don't realize right away that he is missing. When they finally found him, he was back at the temple talking with the elders.

Mary and Joseph were upset because they didn't know where Jesus was or what had happened to him. He didn't understand why they were upset. To him, he had a number of questions that he wanted answered, so they should have known where he was. Even though it made sense to him, adults don't always think the same way, so we should always tell them what we are doing and where we are going.

When I was in confirmation, the part that appealed most to me, was when Jesus was asking questions with the elders. It was important to me because I had a lot of questions. There were parts of the bible that I didn't understand and it made me feel good that Jesus had questions too.

I started to ask questions, but I wasn't met with the positive reaction like Jesus did. Luke tells us that the elders were impressed with Jesus' questions and welcomed them. My questions got me kicked out of my confirmation class, and out of the church. I was told that there was no place for me in the UCC and I believed him for a long time.

Instead of listening to that one person, I should have listened to Luke and his example of Jesus. We see that it is OK to ask questions. Sometimes other people don't see things the way that we do, especially our parents. But, they will be there for you as well as your church family. I guarantee that someone will have your answer.

Sermon

Wednesday's latest thing is she comes up to me and whenever I'm not doing what she wants or I'm not necessarily doing it how she wants, she says, "Faster, Daddy, faster." I was talking with Mom and she told me that people would more likely to want to sing the hymns and eat pizza over listening to me give two sermons. I assured her that if I got too long winded, she could send Wednesday up to tell me faster.

Every person can take different points from a scripture. Today's gospel from Luke has a number of different points depending upon your perspective and experience. Reading this as a parent, the first thing that jumped out at me was that Mary and Joseph had lost Jesus when he stayed at the temple without telling them.

When I had read this before, I thought that it wasn't really a big deal. I mean, he's Jesus. It would make sense that he would be hanging out at a temple. And, he's the son of God, that should protect him a little more than others. But, now I could feel their panic and anguish.

I thought about how this could be a good opportunity to talk about how we can lose Jesus in our own lives. We know that we can always find him in the church. But, we might lose him in our day to day lives and not realize it right away.

But then I started to think about the conversation between Jesus and Mary. I thought about his confusion on why they were upset and why they didn't think to look for him first at the temple.

During Jesus' time, children were introduced to the Torah when they were 5 or 6. They would start going to school and it would focus on bible studies for the first couple of years. They would then start to learn to read by reading Leviticus. They started there because it has a number of the Jewish laws and rules to live by. Eventually they would learn mathematics and writing before they started their apprenticeships around 13.

In this story, Jesus is 12. He is finishing up his schooling and is getting ready to start his apprenticeship. Since he is the first born of his step father, it is expected for him to be a carpenter like his father. But, in Jesus' mind, he is to be following his true father and starts by asking questions in preparation.

Jesus impressed the elders with his questions and knowledge. But, his parents were surprised to find him there and with what he was doing. This made me think about how we perceive children, and especially our own.

So many times, older adults think that they are wiser simply because they are older. We also have a tendency to do things the same way over and over because we are comfortable with how we have done things in the past and not willing to examine it from a different perspective.

When we first moved back and started coming to St. Paul's, I was told by a few people, that I was new to the church and wouldn't understand. We do things in a very specific way because that is how it's done. We get comfortable and do things that way and see things that way.

If we've learned anything over the past couple of years, it should be that the world has changed and it is continually changing. And the old ways don't always work. So we need to be more open to change and to look at things from a different perspective.

A way for us to do this, is to be more open to the younger generations' perspectives. It is our duty to teach them. But in doing so we can also learn. When they ask us questions, we shouldn't just answer the questions, but open a dialogue. Talk to them about the how's and the why's. Then they can understand us just as much as we can understand them.

The two psalms that we read today have been called psalms of forgiveness for the elderly.