

Dec. 30, 2012  
First Presbyterian Church, Waukesha  
“THE EXTENDED FAMILY”

**Luke 2:41-52**

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; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

The lectionary lesson today is really about families. Joseph and Mary, along with Jesus, went up from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Jesus was 12, and by that time, Joseph and Mary had several other children to watch out for. So, on the way home, they gathered the rest of their brood and didn't notice that Jesus was missing. They thought he was with the rest of the extended family which went up with them from Nazareth.

Leaving the younger children with the extended family, to get them safely back to Nazareth, Joseph and Mary rushed back to Jerusalem and for 3 days searched for Jesus. Finally, they found him in the temple, debating with the leadership in the temple weighty aspects of theology. Mary lectured Jesus, "Why have you treated us so?" And Jesus responded, acknowledging an even wider extended family, "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?" At age 12, Jesus was acknowledging a special relationship with his Father in heaven.

The Apostle Paul, in both Romans and Galatians, uses the metaphor of adoption. That you and I are adopted sons and daughters of God through Jesus Christ.

Galatians 4:5 says, "God sent forth his son, born of woman, to redeem us so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters of God. It goes on to say, "God has sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, (Daddy) Father'."

We are part of the Holy family. The adoption doctrine teaches us that we have a new relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and we function as heirs of the kingdom

of heaven.

This all means that that little family of Mary and Joseph and the babe in the manger are our family, and that we go with them, fleeing into Egypt for fear of Herod, and by God's grace, living off the proceeds of the gifts of the Magi.

The doctrine of adoption also means that we go with them to Nazareth when Herod is dead, and perhaps by that time there is another baby or two, because we know that Jesus had younger brothers and sisters. That is our family. And it is our older brother, of which it is written, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and humanity." That is our older brother, the firstborn, and of course, as He was born of God, we, too, are reborn through our acceptance of Him.

The doctrine of adoption also means that we go with these parents, frantically searching for their oldest son, when he was only 12 years old. And we experience the wonderment and confusion of His saying, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

This place, this church building, is dedicated to God and is our Father God's house. It's where we listen and ask questions, as did Jesus. And it is where we know for sure that we are part of an extended family. I felt it especially two weeks ago, when we, altogether, put on our pageant, young and old. We were one big family, having fun together.

Along with the rest of the nation, I was instructed by our president, acknowledging that as a nation, we are one family. And when 20 children are senselessly murdered, they are OUR children, part of our family.

The concept from this passage of the extended family of Mary and Joseph and Jesus and all their relatives from Nazareth is embodied in our realizing suddenly that we are parents to all the children of the world, and our lives are changed when we become a universal parent. Our money is no longer our own, our time is no longer our own. Our worries are no longer just about ourselves, but about the starving children, the exploited children, the orphan child, the child soldier in Africa, the children in war zones, the

female children struggling for an education in Afghanistan, the polio suffering children in Pakistan denied vaccine because of politics.

We are not able to understand murder so egregious and so random. But as one extended family we participate in the shock and horror and loss.

But it is our comfort that we belong, through Jesus Christ, to His kingdom. In his days on earth, He told the disciples, “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” And, of course, we take that to still mean that that same Jesus Christ is alive, through the power of His resurrection, here and now, walking about in our lives, our homes, our church, our town. And we need to get to know Him. Christ is real, and we need a personal relationship with Him. We need to think of Him as our friend and as a model for living.

But when Jesus told them that the kingdom of God was in their midst, He didn’t just mean that He Himself was standing there in their midst. He also meant that He, through His Holy Spirit, was in them. That when we know Jesus Christ, His spirit enters us, and He is not just a moral, ethical example – not just a friend, but a spiritual power that enters us and makes us, and His church, part of His kingdom, His rule here on earth.

We don’t just go down to Egypt with that little Bethlehem family. We don’t just go up to Nazareth with them. We don’t just go to Jerusalem and search with them for their lost son. We also go with Him from one end of the Holy Land to another, preaching and teaching God’s word, and we go with Him to the cross, and there we die with Him, and are raised again to everlasting life.

Our resurrection is sure and certain in Jesus Christ. Heaven is a free gift, given to us through the Bethlehem babe and a 12-year-old son of Mary, and the extended family of our brothers and sisters, who also trust Christ for everlasting life. All praise and honor be to our God.

Let me read for you a verse from our first hymn:

“Hail the heaven born prince of peace!  
Hail the son of righteousness.  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Risen with healing in His wings.

Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that we no more may die,  
Born to raise us from the earth,  
Born to give us second birth.”