**“The Child Grew”**

1 Kings 3:4-15

Ephesians 1:3-14

Luke 2:40-52

 Christmas 2

“The Child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon Him. Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

Peter Pan had some things **nicely** established. He had some things **quite wrong**, but some things he had **nicely** engrained. They call his **shortcomings** a “Peter Pan Syndrome”. What **we’d call** those not able to embrace his **virtues**, though, is closed-minded stick-in-the-muds, set-in-their-own-ways (highly inappropriately so), or just plain **OLD**. “I don’t want to **grow up**, but I do want to **grow**” may be the **best of both worlds**, because “**the Child [Jesus]** **grew** and **became strong**, **filled with wisdom**. And **the favor of God was upon Him**. **Jesus INCREASED IN WISDOM AND IN STATURE AND IN FAVOR WITH GOD AND MAN**.”

**Text**

There are some who don’t **feel the need to grow** … they are, either, **old** or **adult (just by age) and stubborn** or **self-sufficient-thinking** or, maybe even, **young and unwilling**. **They are** (for the most part) **cold** and **unapproachable**, probably in most all cases **unlearned** and that simply because they’ve **never been very eager or open to learning**. What they are is **self-limiting** and **closed**, “**cold**” is an appropriate descriptive, but “**callous**” also fits by **how that coldness shows itself**. And they share not the **childlikeness** of a Peter Pan, but rather a **childishness** (and **unreasonableness**) of it. Peter Pan’s partial **virtue** showed also his **flaw** in that he, too, was **childish**, not enough **childlike** … which is the **irony** of that story (and **its point**).

Jesus was **12**, but He could have easily **been** **27** in the account of our Gospel reading. What we have-to-know is that **He didn’t come** **fully knowledgeable**. **Perfect He was, yes** (and without the errors of sinning), but **knowledgeable to the nth degree, no**. He **devoured** **(no doubt)** every ounce of testimony from His mother Mary and stepfather Joseph about what angels had said as well as the witness from other angels or stars of shepherds and wise men and what they said. He **learned of Himself** in that way but also through the prophets of Scripture. **Isaiah taught Jesus about Himself** … and **He** **learned**. He (this text says in Luke 2) “**grew** and **became strong**, filled with wisdom … **increased** in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” He came and **became** (which, beyond the incarnation in Bethlehem is **the** **wonder** of a 7-year **growth stint** in Egypt and a lot-more-than-7-year **growth stint** in Nazareth). And I love what He showed to be a **key component of His growth process: His parents “found Him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions”**.

In Jesus’ **growth**, guess what He had to **deal with**. I imagine His mother, Mary, withheld this bit because “a sword will pierce through your own soul also” but Isaiah taught Him that “He’d **grow up** like a young plant but **despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief**. **He** would be despised and men would **esteem Him not**, but bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows, stricken, **smitten (even by God)** and afflicted, pierced for man’s transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, but with **His wounds** we’re healed, oppressed, afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so **He** would open not His mouth, but be **cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of the people, His grave made with the wicked**. Yet it would be **the will of the Father to** **crush Him**; **HE** has **put Him to grief when His soul makes an offering for guilt**.” At **12** (if not **before then** with this sacrificial service for creation’s sake getting hinted at) Jesus began to **learn** **His fate**. Imagine, then, **His questions** … **His** **confirmation efforts** about **what** **MUST BE**.

**Application**

But **His learning (and growth)** He considered **worth it** **for us** … **THAT’S** **the Gospel**. Our response to it is that **our** learning and growth must be worth it **for Him**. If there’s a New **Years’** (a new **day’s**) “Resolution” for every Christian (every redeemed and saved human) to **make** (and **keep**) it’s to **be ourselves (and always while in this life) growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God (becoming strong, and stronger in THAT)**. And as there’s no reason why we can’t **learn from examples from (for instance)** Solomon as well as Jesus, look how **young and growing Solomon** **embraced the constant process**. “**Give** your servant, Lord, an **understanding mind**, that I may **discern between good and evil**”. But God answered him, “I will **give you** **also** what you have not asked in, both, riches and honor **beyond wisdom**”.

There is an **interesting word** used toward the end of the Gospel account that **highlights** what this lesson **provides for us to learn from**. After the parents (Mary and Joseph) “did not understand” what Jesus did in staying behind and (as He described it) “being in My Father’s house”, it said that Jesus (and really for the rest of His earthly life) “went down with them and came to Nazareth and was **submissive** to them”. This **“submission” to His Father / His will and, also, to His mother and stepfather and (even Him as God) learning and growing from each and every appropriate and God-pleasing teacher and Temple** was the same **“submission”** that He asks of us. It’s the core message of the Epistle to the Ephesians. God the Father “predestined us **for** adoption through Him **for** “the **purpose of His will** **/ chose us in Jesus before the foundation of the world**, that **we SHOULD BE** holy and blameless before Him, **submitting** to each other also” it later says (in service), but especially to teachers and others **given authority by God** (**after Him and for Him**) that we might **be taught** and **learn from them**.

The **negatives** of a Peter Pan Syndrome include a **forgetfulness about history** (“**amnesiac**” is the term). We should **submit** **to memory God’s history with this world and His Words to us**. We should **learn profitably** from what has gone before us and (like Solomon) “discern” (from it) “between good and evil”, choosing Good. The child**ish** don’t learn from history / ignore it, so are doomed to repeat wherever it showed failure.

The **second of 4 negatives** of a Peter Pan Syndrome is called an “**inconsequential foolishness**”. Living as if there were no consequences leads to a (**3rd negative**) “**impulsiveness**” that shoots from mostly only gut levels (feelings / emotions / passions over logical reason). “Logic” is the very definition of Jesus (that boy) as the “logos” (the “Word” of God), so every bit of **reason that makes sense**. Later He’d remind the world that **He is** “the way, the **truth**, and the life”. You will not find that “truth” but **in Him** then expressed through all the **things** that got made through Him. “Every **action** has a **re-action**”, so **let every action start with Jesus** who’ll **shape the other**.

And Jesus **cares infinitely**, which **opposes apathy as any opposite does**. “**Callousness**” is the 4th, and last, of the Peter Pan Syndrome negatives. The opposite to that (to grow in) is **compassion** which **cares for people and truth** (a “**way**” and “**life**”).

“**GROW**” (**develop**, and continually **mature**) being (that way) child**like** for all of your days on this earth, never stagnant or stuck or stubbornly “set how you shouldn’t be”. Be Peter Pans, maybe, from the **good aspect** of not OLD and stodgy and closed-to-discovery and proper teaching but **hungry for that** and **smart about where you can get it**.

**Submit to the process of growth in God’s Good**. “After three days Jesus’ parents **found Him** **in the Temple” (it’s where Jesus was “found”), sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions**”. **HE** “**increased** in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” **WE ought to be found that way**. In +Jesus’ name, amen. And may the peace of God that passes all **human understanding** keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.