

Advent Series: Not a Silent Night

Sermon #3: “Amazed, Astounded, and Astonished”

Scripture: Luke 2:41-51 (to be read during the sermon)

Source: Rev. Adam Hamilton at the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, MO

<http://www.cor.org/worship/sermon-archives/show/sermons/Raising-the-Boy-Jesus/>

Opening Video Clip

PP#1: Not a Silent Night ~ Christmas Through the Eyes of Mary

“Amazed, Astounded, and Astonished”

“Jesus replied, ‘Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father’s house?’” - Luke 2:49

Not a Silent Night. Christmas through the eyes of Mary. “Amazed, Astounded, and Astonished” Luke 2:49 “Jesus replied, ‘Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father’s house?’”

PP#2: *Image of Mary cradling the baby Jesus with wonder on her face.*

“Mary did you know...this Child that you delivered will soon deliver you?”

This year we’re trying to see Christmas through new eyes, through the eyes of Mary. Mary had the best view of that first Christmas, and most of the Christmas story comes from her telling. We’re trying to see Christmas again for the very first time. And as we see what Christmas meant to Mary—throughout her life, we can see what Christmas means for us.

PP#3: *Image of Mary (the mother of Jesus) in old age, her tomb, or at Jesus’ empty tomb.*

But we’re going about it kinda backwards! Two weeks ago we looked at what Christmas meant to Mary when she was nearing the time of her death. At that point in her life, she clung to His promises that she would see Him again someday. Christmas for her meant that Jesus came to defeat death and offer eternal life. Christmas and Easter are two sides of the same coin. Because of Christmas, we have Easter, and because of Jesus resurrection, we have resurrection, too.

PP#4: *Image of Mary at the foot of the cross.*

Last week we looked at what Christmas meant to Mary when she watched her Son die on the cross. She’s about 49 years old, and her heart was pierced. Only Christmas could help her make any sense of that horrible day. She remembered what the angel had foretold, “You will call Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21) The cradle and the cross go hand in hand. She gave birth to a Savior. Christmas showed her the meaning of salvation.

PP#5: *Image of Mary with Jesus at the age of 12 in Jerusalem.*

Today, we back up again, about 20 years in time. Mary is around 28 years old. We see the scene in Jerusalem, with Jesus at the temple. Jesus was 12 years old.

So, to put this into a bit of perspective, I’m going to ask Michael Karan, who is just about 12, to come up and read this passage for us. As you listen to it, try to imagine Jesus at the age of 12. Now, Michael has blond hair, but Jesus probably had black hair...so try to use your imagination!

PP#6-8: Luke 2:41-51

41 Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. 42 When He was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to their custom. 43 After the festival was over, they were returning home, but the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents didn't know it. 44 Supposing that He was among their band of travelers, they journeyed on for a full day while looking for Him among their family and friends. 45 When they didn't find Jesus, they returned to Jerusalem to look for Him. 46 After three days they found Him in the temple. He was sitting among the teachers, listening to them and putting questions to them. 47 Everyone who heard Him was amazed by His understanding and His answers. 48 When His parents saw Him, they were shocked.

His mother said, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Listen! Your father and I have been worried. We've been looking for you!"

49 Jesus replied, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?" 50 But they didn't understand what He said to them.

51 Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. His mother cherished every word in her heart.

Reader: Luke 2:41-51

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Thanks, Michael. Good job! What do you think, church, does he make a pretty good Jesus? Might have to dye your hair, though!

PP#9: *Another image of Mary with Jesus at the age of 12 in Jerusalem.*

This is a pretty amazing story. First of all, this is the only story about Jesus' childhood we have in the Bible. There are the stories of Jesus' birth, and then there are the stories of Jesus as an adult. This is the only one in between. Now, about 100 years later, other stories of Jesus' childhood were fabricated. But this is the only one in the Bible.

Secondly, this is the last time we see Jesus' step-dad, Joseph. By the time Jesus is baptized, some 18 years later, Joseph seems to have died. So, last story with Joseph. But I think even more importantly, this story contains *the first recorded words of Jesus*. And He was 12.

This story had to come from Mary. She told the story to the disciples, who shared it, and Luke then wrote it down. Now, this begs the question: of all the stories about Jesus' childhood, why did Mary choose to share this one? Why did only this one get recorded? The reason, I believe, is because of Christmas.

PP#10: "Amazed, Astounded, and Astonished"

1) It was a traumatic moment for Mary

Well, at least on a very basic level, Mary told this story because she remembered it so vividly. You know, it's the most traumatic moments as parents that we remember best. Right, parents? Don't you tell and retell the near-death crises? Like, "Don't walk along that railing! Remember the time you almost fell off? I thought I was going to lose you! If it hadn't been for that tree branch you grabbed when you lost your balance, you wouldn't be here right now. Now get down from there!"

About six years ago we went to Silver Dollar City, an amusement park near Branson. It was raining, and so we were scrambling from place to place looking to duck out of the rain. One time we turned around, and couldn't see Nathan! "Reese, where's Nathan?"

"He was supposed to be with you, don't you have him?"

"No! I thought he was with you!"

And you know that panic that goes from zero to sixty in like, two seconds? We spent the next 20 minutes retracing our steps and calling out his name. We didn't care everyone was staring at us. We couldn't find him! He was gone. Probably kidnaped. Or crushed beneath some ride. Or murdered. You know how your mind goes ridiculous, as your heart is pounding in your ears. We were certain we would never see him again! So, we headed to the information booth to get help. And, as we approached, we saw a staff person, holding Nathan's hand, also walking to the booth. He had discovered Nathan looking at a candy booth, oblivious to the rain.

We were panicked, and it had only been 30 minutes! Imagine Mary and Joseph.

PP#11: *Another image of Jesus at the age of 12, sitting with the teachers at the temple.*

They had gone down to Jerusalem, a five day walk from Nazareth. They had celebrated the Passover, like usual, the Bible says. Lots of people traveled in for the holiday. Afterwards, everyone heads back home. Usually, in those days, the women traveled together, the men together, and the kids all traveled together under the guidance of some chaperones. So, Mary and Joseph thought that Jesus was with all the kids. When they settle in after the first day, they go to pick Jesus up when the kids arrive. But no Jesus there! He was left back in Jerusalem! Zero to sixty in two seconds. Back in that big city all by Himself?

They rush back, probably only taking about three hours as they hurried. They go to all the places they were, the place they stayed, relatives, friends, finally they ask the soldiers. The next day they go to the markets, roam the streets, check in the shops over and over again. Anyone seen Him? He was supposed to be born for something special. This can't be happening. What if He's kidnaped, made a slave, or worse? Finally, on the third day, with their hearts broken, they check the morgues.

It doesn't say why they go to the temple, but my guess was to ask the priests to pray for God's help. And as they go in to ask their help, there, among them, sits Jesus!

PP#12: *Image of Mary and Joseph angry with Jesus at the temple, subtitled:*

“When His parents saw Him, they were shocked. His mother said, ‘Child, why have you treated us like this? Listen! Your father and I have been worried. We’ve been looking for you!’” -Luke 2:48

The Greek word here is more than just astonished. It’s more like dumbfounded. “You’ve got to be kidding!” Why did you think this was OK? You have caused us terrible fear.... The word here now is also used in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, describing when the rich man was in hell. Mary was saying, “You put us through a living hell!” Any parents here know what she’s saying?

Now, I just can’t help but notice that they found Him *on the third day*. The third day. We hear that again at Easter! Jesus was buried, but on the third day, He is raised again. I think Luke picked up on this. Jesus was gone, but it turned out OK. When you trust in God, the third day always comes. Yes, it can be dark and scary for a couple of days, But when you trust in God, the third day always comes. Jesus is back. Mary’s third day came with great joy.

PP#13: “Amazed, Astounded, and Astonished”

- 1) It was a traumatic moment for Mary
- 2) It was a defining moment for Jesus

You know, usually those traumatic moments are also the most defining moments. They change the kid, too. To this day I relive over and over again the time I plowed the car right into a huge snow drift, three miles from anywhere, in the middle of a blizzard. It was 10 below and I only had a light jacket. I was certain I would freeze to death before I could get help. I was 14...yes, we could drive at that age in North Dakota!

PP#14: *Image of Mary and Joseph finding Jesus in the temple.*

Traumatic moments become transforming moments. Mary says, “Your *father* and I were looking for you.” Jesus looks calmly at them, all frazzled and emotional, and asks, “Why were you searching? Why didn’t you know where to find me? I was in my *Father’s* house!” “Your *father* and I were searching for you.” “I was in my *Father’s* house.”

I bet that took Joseph’s breath away. Jesus knew who His Father really was. At that moment, I bet Mary was taken back to nine months before Christmas, to when the angel said to her, “He will be called the Son of the Most High.”

Jesus had come to realize His identity. Remember, He was about Michael’s age!

The very next story in Luke is when Jesus is baptized by John. And when He is, a voice comes from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son.” And then the next story is when Satan is trying to tempt Jesus. And three times Satan taunts Jesus, saying, “If you are really the Son of God....” And then, three years later, Luke records Jesus back in Jerusalem, on trial in front of the Jewish leaders. They ask Him, “Are you the Son of God?” Jesus answers, “It is as you say.”

Here, at the age of 12, Jesus recognizes His special relationship with God. And then He makes a decision to accept it, and live into it. This decision was a defining moment for Jesus. Jesus chose to accept His relationship with God. He accepted Christmas.

Mary told this story because it was a defining moment for Jesus and His identity. And from then on, Jesus tells us that we, too, can have a life-changing relationship with God the Father. John 1:12, “But those who did welcome Him, those who believed in His name, He gave them the ability to become God’s children.” And when Jesus teaches His followers to pray, He teaches them to say, “Our Father....” And here, it is all the good images of father: love, mercy, sacrifice.

By the way, this is why we start confirmation at the age of 12. Kids can make life commitments to follow God at that age. Michael, you start confirmation next fall!

PP#15: “Amazed, Astounded, and Astonished”

- 1) It was a traumatic moment for Mary
- 2) It was a defining moment for Jesus
- 3) It was an amazing moment for the people

And the third reason, it seems, that Mary made sure this story got told, is the response of the people. Those who were listening to Him, the professors and experts, it says they were amazed at what He was saying. The word here means shaken, moved to tears, utterly amazed, astounded, astonished. Today, we might say, “They were blown away!” Jesus, about Michael’s age, was not just listening, but stumping the experts, showing them things they never saw before!

This was the response to Jesus over and over again. People, the Bible says all over the place, were astounded by what Jesus said. Mark 1:22 “The people were amazed at His teaching, because He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.” Matthew 7:29, Luke 13, John 6. Over and over again. When Levi hears Jesus, Levi drops everything and follows Jesus. When Zacchaeus hears Jesus, he gives half of all he owns away. People follow Him, start living out His teachings of loving, forgiving, being good Samaritans, putting others first, sacrificing themselves. When Jesus spoke, people’s lives were changed. And here it already when Jesus is 12, when He understands His identity.

Jesus died for your sins. He is your Savior. He wins resurrection for you, and eternal life. But Jesus is also Lord. He is the one who speaks with a special authority. He is the one to follow. We live for Him.

PP#16: *Image of shepherds (or even magi) worshiping Jesus.*

John 1 says that Jesus is the Light of all people. We have His light. It changes how we live. In the Great Commission, Jesus says that His followers are taught everything He has commanded.

At Christmas, we celebrate the resurrection, we celebrate salvation, but we also celebrate a King born, a King whom we follow, a King whom we obey. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. When we celebrate Christmas, when we bow down to worship Him, too, we pledge allegiance to this King, swearing our oath of loyalty, submission, and obedience. That’s what it means when we celebrate Christmas! We are His followers...*followers*. We follow Him. We obey Him...because you and I, we are astounded, too.

Why did Mary tell this story? Because her Son offered the Words of Life.

Now, I love how this story ends. Mary and Joseph, it says, “did not understand what He had said to them.” Isn’t that the case with every parent of tweens? Jonna, you know what this is saying? But I bet Mary was hearing the words of the angels, and the shepherds, and the magi, in her head.

Then, it says, Jesus went back home with them, and was obedient to them. And no more stories for the next 18 years. Some parents suggest He was grounded for 18 years! But the Scripture says He lived obediently.

The one we are to follow in obedience, lived by obedience. He taught and showed the path of life. Jesus was born to share words of life. So, be careful when you celebrating Christmas. It’s dangerous. Because celebrating Christmas means we choose to live obediently following our new-born Lord and King.

Merry Christmas!