

## **“Twelve Years Later”**

### **Luke 2:40-52**

When I was a young adult, I remember telling people that I made straight “A’s” through the eighth grade. I honestly thought that I had. But then one day my family and I spent the weekend with my parents and my mother found my report cards from those years. It was pretty funny to everyone but me because I was clearly not the straight A student I thought I was. My high school report cards were pretty much how I remember them. I graduated by the skin of my teeth. My parents never put a “My child is an honor student at Parkwood High” sticker on their cars. I forgot somehow the reality of my early educational experience.

In our text this morning, Luke is going to give us a glimpse into a handful of days from the life of the most brilliant kid who ever lived. But here are a few examples of little children who amazed the world in their day. And thanks to John MacArthur for these.

Jean Louis Cardiac, from the eighteenth century; born in France, he was known as the wonder child. Jean could recite the alphabet when he was three months old. At the age of four he not only read Latin but translated it into English and French. He read Greek and Hebrew and was proficient in such subjects as arithmetic, history, geography and genealogies by six. He died in Paris when he was seven.

And then there was Christian Friedrich Heineken. He was known throughout Europe as The Infant of Lubeck, after his birthplace in Germany. In addition to an astounding faculty for numbers, little Christian reportedly knew all the principle events related in the Bible by the time he was one. At three he was conversant with world history, geography, Latin and French. The king of Denmark sent for him in 1724 to confirm these stories of the child's extraordinary abilities. Shortly after his stay in Copenhagen, little Christian became ill and died at age four.

And then there was the very famous Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, maybe the most prodigious of all child prodigies. Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria. At four he began music lessons with his violinist

father. At five he composed minuets. At six he was a virtuoso on the violin and harpsichord and toured with his older sister, creating a sensation in European courts with this phenomenal ability to sight-read music and improvise at six. He wrote his first symphony at eight and at eleven, forced to compose in solitary confinement for the suspicious archbishop of Salzburg, he passed the test and was offered the salary job of city concert master at eleven. At twelve he wrote two operas and a mass. His reputation grew over the years. His operas, concertos and symphonies of the highest order came from his pen. Today he is still regarded as one of the world's supreme geniuses.

And then there was in the nineteenth century the famous John Stewart Mill. He was often called a manufactured genius. He was the product of an educational experiment that reads like a record of medieval torture. His irritable father was a historian and philosopher named James Mill. He forced his son to learn Greek at three, history at four, Latin, geometry and algebra by eight. By twelve he had read Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Terrance, Cicero, Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides and Demosthenes, all in Greek. His father required him to write English verse and educate his younger siblings. John Stewart Mill eventually became a world renowned philosopher.

And then there was also living on into the beginning of the twentieth century, Truman Henry Safford, son of a Vermont farmer. Showed his precocity at age three when his parents amused themselves with his calculating powers. At seven he studied algebra and geometry. At nine he constructed and published an almanac. At ten he originated a new rule for obtaining moon risings and settings in one quarter of the time of previous methods. At aged ten he was asked to square the number, that is to multiply it by itself, the number 365,365,365,365,365 multiplied by itself. He gave the correct answer in less than a minute. And I'm not going to read you the forty numbers that make up the answer. Obviously he was smart. He graduated from Harvard at the age of eighteen.

Further into the twentieth century there is William James Sidis, son of a Harvard psychology professor who used to use his child to prove that children could master very complex subjects at a young age. At six months he knew his ABCs. At two years he read adult books. He was into advanced mathematics at three, mastered French by four. At eight he graduated from high school. After independent study in Greek, Latin, German, Russian, French, Turkish and Armenian, he entered Harvard at eleven where he lectured the Harvard mathematical society on four-dimensional bodies.

And then many believe the most brilliant child prodigy alive today is Kim Ung-yong, born in 1963 in Korea, amazing person. He was talking at five months, writing at seven months. His IQ is estimated higher than any. When he was four years old he was fluent in Korean, English, Japanese and German and he was solving intricate calculus problems on Japanese television before his fifth birthday. Go figure.

These were all amazing children, unbelievable children. But Luke is introducing his readers to the Creator of the Universe. He is twelve when we meet Him this morning but Jesus knew who He was at twelve and already knew His purpose for being God with us. All the children we just heard about were amazing but just imagine the mind that created everything being in a little child born in Bethlehem. And Jesus knew who He was. He asked His parents when they found Him, <sup>49</sup> *And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?"*

Our text:

<sup>40</sup> *The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.*

<sup>41</sup> *Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.*

<sup>42</sup> *And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast;*

<sup>43</sup> *and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it,*

<sup>44</sup> *but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.*

<sup>45</sup> *When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him.*

<sup>46</sup> *Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.*

<sup>47</sup> *And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.*

<sup>48</sup> *When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You."*

<sup>49</sup> *And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?"*

<sup>50</sup> *But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.*

<sup>51</sup> *And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.*

<sup>52</sup> *And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Lk. 2:40-52 NAU)*

Luke is the only gospel author who provides us with anything from Jesus' childhood, and this is just a snippet of around 15 days that he covers. From the time the family left Nazareth to go to Jerusalem which took at least 3 days, through the eight days of the feast, through the days journey on the way back to Nazareth when they discovered He was missing, through the days journey back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus,

through the 3 days they searched for Him, covers around 15 days. And that's it. Luke writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit didn't bother to tell his reader anything other than this one period of the Lord's childhood.

If you're familiar with Roman Catholicism then you know that one of their theologians centuries ago concocted stories about the little boy Jesus doing several miraculous things, the best known of which is the story of Jesus molding birds out of clay and then breathing on them and making them come alive.

### **The frightening experience of a missing child in a big city.**

You remember back in the '70's when we began seeing missing children's faces on milk cartons. Talk about something that shook us out of our security as parents, that did it. Parents were afraid to let their children play in their own yards without one of them being out there with them. We haven't gotten over it, and a good thing.

Have any of you ever experienced being separated from a child in a mall or some large public venue? With little children, all one has to do is turn away from the child for just a minute and they can be gone. And we can't help but freak out. We imagine all kinds of scenarios, most of them bad. That is precisely what Joseph and Mary experienced on one of their annual trips to the big city of Jerusalem.

<sup>46</sup> *Then, after **three days** they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.*

<sup>47</sup> *And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.* <sup>48</sup> *When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "**Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.**"*

"Son, why have you put us through this? Why have you treated us this way? What were you thinking? We have been absolutely beside ourselves with fear. We have been terrified. We were so tormented when we couldn't find you for three days." And that is all within the Greek

word behind the English word “anxiously.” It means all those things. The word anxiously doesn’t do it justice.

**How quickly we forget what God has done in our lives.**

*<sup>49</sup> And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" And the answer was clearly, “No, we didn’t know that you had to be in Your Father’s House. We didn’t even know that this was your Father’s house. I guess we forgot.”*

I’m a bit puzzled about Joseph and Mary’s reaction to Jesus’ statement. They were clueless. They did not understand His statement. And seriously, it seems that they had forgotten who He was and what had happened when He was born.

It had just been twelve years since the Arch Angel Gabriel had appeared to Zacharias in the temple to announce the birth of a son to him and his elderly wife, Elizabeth. It had just been twelve years since this same angel had come into Mary’s home in Nazareth and announced to the young virgin that she was going to become with child and that that child would be the Son of the Most High. It had just been twelve years since Joseph had been told in a dream that Mary’s unborn child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was to be named Jesus. It had just been twelve years since the unborn child in Elizabeth’s womb had leaped with joy when he heard the voice of the mother of his God and Savior greeting his mother in her home. It had been just twelve years since Joseph and Mary had made the long trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem where her Son was born in a manger. It had just been twelve years since the myriad of angels had announced to the shepherds that the Christ had been born in Bethlehem. It had been just twelve years since they had their Son circumcised and dedicated in the temple while two prophets had recognized who the child was. It had just been twelve years since Joseph had to pack up his family and move to Egypt. It had only been ten years since the magi had brought gold, frankincense and myrrh to

their home in Nazareth. How long does it take to forget such amazing and miraculous things? How could anyone possibly forget that? I think I know how and why and this is just my theory. It was by the will of God to allow the child to experience the fullness of humanity as He grew yet never forget who He was. It was designed by the Father to keep Joseph and Mary from trying to shield their child, the Son of the Most High, from the bad things in life that we all experience. That's just my theory.

I close with this. It's easy for us to forget the joy and the peace we experienced when by God's grace we were born again. It's easy to let that fall by the wayside and take second place to everything else in our lives. For yours truly, it has been almost 47 years since that day in the cafeteria. How long has it been for you since you were saved from your sins and the wrath to come?

Do you remember the voice of the Good Shepherd in your ear and your heart and your spirit when He revealed Himself to you?

Do you need to rekindle that fire the Spirit put in you back then?