

## Obedient for Us

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our text is from the Gospel reading. **And Jesus went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.** Here ends our text.

When you were a child, do you ever remember asking your mom, “Why do I have to do that?” And she said, “Because I said so.” Or maybe you asked your pastor, “Why do I have to memorize all these meanings in the catechism?” And he said, “Because it’ll be good for you.” But frankly, those didn’t seem like good enough reasons, and so you didn’t. You sinned. You disobeyed your mom and broke the Fourth Commandment which says, “Honor your Father and your Mother.” You didn’t gladly hear and learn the Word of God and so you broke the Third Commandment which says, “Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it Holy.” Of course, this got you in trouble with your mom who doled out more chores for you to do as punishment. And this got you into trouble with your pastor who gave you an unsatisfactory grade on your memory work. You fall out of their favor. But this also got you into trouble with God. Because of your unsatisfactory keeping of his Commandments, He has every right to judge your disobedience, take your life, and punish you in hell. You fall out of favor with God. But thankfully, we see in our reading today how Jesus, even as a twelve-year-old boy, keeps both the Third and Fourth Commandments for you. Now this may not get you out of trouble with you mom or pastor or other authority whom you disobey. You still have to face the temporary, earthly consequences of your disobedience. But Christ’s obedience on your behalf does get you out of trouble with God and brings you back into his favor. Jesus knows his memory work and obeys his mom and dad for your benefit.

In our Gospel reading today, Mary and Joseph are being obedient to God by keeping the Third Commandment. They’ve come to worship at the Temple for the feast of the Passover, and they’ve brought their twelve-year-old son Jesus with them. However, after church is over, Mary and Joseph load up and head for home, but they forget Jesus behind. This happens in our family when we think one of the kids has gotten a ride home with someone else. After a day’s drive, Mary and Joseph discover their mistake and return to Jerusalem. After a day long search, looking everywhere they think a twelve-year-old boy would play, they find him in the Temple courts. But he’s not playing. He’s sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. This might not come as any surprise to us who know that Jesus is God. As God, Jesus is omniscient and knows all things about the world and especially about God’s word. But in his state of humiliation, Jesus laid aside the full use of his divine omniscience. He knew the answers and had great understanding of the Scriptures because he studied them as a boy. Jesus not only came to church on the Sabbath, but he also held God’s word sacred every day of the week and gladly heard it. He learned, marked, and inwardly digested the Scriptures every day. Jesus was obedient to God his Father and kept the Third Commandment.

But Mary thinks that Jesus hasn’t kept the Fourth Commandment. She’s upset because she thinks Jesus treated her and his father badly by getting himself lost. And then they had to go and search for him. But Jesus wasn’t lost. He was right where they left him. Jesus questions his mother’s implication, “Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I must be in my *Father’s* house?” Here, Jesus reminds Mary that his true father isn’t his guardian Joseph, but God the Father in heaven. Jesus has kept the Fourth Commandment by honoring his Father in heaven. He’s in his Father’s house learning as much as he can from the Word of God. But Jesus also honor’s his earthly mother and stepdad. Our text says, **“Jesus went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them.”** Jesus obeyed the Fourth Commandment by honoring Mary and Joseph, serving and obeying them, loving and cherishing them.

Now this is an amazing thing. Remember that as the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is fully God. All creation obeys him. On a macroscopic level, the stars and the planets, the wind and the seas obey him. He commands their orbits and calms the storms. On a microscopic level, diseases and bacteria and cells obey him. He commands fevers to depart and flesh to be restored. On a spiritual level, the angels and demons obey him. The heavenly host are at his command, and he casts demons out of people. Even death submits to Jesus when he raises people from the dead. Since he’s God, all things should and must obey Jesus. But here we see Jesus being submissive to his parents. The Creator obeys the creature. As their child, Jesus puts himself under the authority of Mary and Joseph. What amazing humility.

Second Sunday after Christmas - January 2, 2022

Which begs the question, if Jesus willingly obeys his earthly parents and submits to their authority, even though he's God, should we not obey the authority which God has placed over us, who are mere mortals? Should we not obey our parents and guardians, our teachers and pastors, our civil servants and government? And yet so often, we don't. We don't honor our parents, love and cherish them. We complain about our teachers and pastors and blame them for our shortcomings. We criticize and disregard the laws of our land which God gives for our benefit and the benefit of our neighbor. All to our own demise.

And here's Jesus coming to every week-long worship festival at the Temple. He's not only in the synagogue every Sabbath day, but he memorizes and meditates on the Scriptures every day, enough that he amazes his teachers. He's the Son of God, and yet he honors his heavenly Father by coming to worship, and in his state of humiliation he readily studies and learns more and more about God's Word every day. On the other hand, we grudgingly give up one hour a week for worship, and sometimes not even that. It's not "Remember the Sabbath *hour*," but "Remember the Sabbath *day* by keeping it holy." Many of us have several Bibles in our household, but they remain closed, collecting dust on the shelf. The Word of God is accessible all over the air waves, but we spend our free time watching secular news and reading social media posts. We fail to read the Bible to ourselves and our children.

Our Lord must look down on us in amazement. He could easily say, "I'm the Son of God, and I kept the Third and Fourth Commandments, even when I was a twelve-year-old boy. What's wrong with you adults? Its no wonder your own children don't mind you, and they spurn the Lord's house." We should all be ashamed of our disobedience which not only brings temporal consequences but God's eternal judgment and wrath.

But God had mercy on us. He sent his Son Jesus to keep these Commandments, but not in order to be an example for us to emulate nor be a measuring stick to show our failures. God sent his Son to keep these Commandments in our place. Jesus is obedient for us. He obeys God and man, not to make us more guilty, but to make us holy and bring us back into God's favor.

How does Jesus' keeping of the Third and Fourth Commandments and all the Commandments make you holy? When Jesus kept all the Laws that you can't keep, we call this his active obedience. He was actively obedient, keeping the Law in your place. No longer a boy, but as a man Jesus obeyed the governing authorities, even when they weren't just. In his passion, Jesus submitted himself to the Jewish Sanhedrin and to a Roman governor. Even when they treated him unrighteously, Jesus remained perfectly righteous before God and man. And at your baptism, Jesus gave his perfect righteousness, his perfect obedience, to you. So now when God looks at you, he sees Christ's righteousness and holiness. He sees a new man. Christ's active obedience is one of the ways in which he saves you.

But Christ also saves you by what we call his passive obedience. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus didn't use his divine powers to destroy his enemies or escape. He laid aside those powers and allowed himself to be arrested. He remained in his state of humiliation. When adult bullies beat him and flogged him, Jesus didn't use his divine omnipotence to zap them all dead. He remained passive. When they blindfolded Jesus and struck him and commanded him to prophesy, "Who hit you?", Jesus didn't use his divine omniscience to call them out by name and frighten them. He remained passive. And when Jesus hung on the cross and mockers challenged him to come down and save himself, Jesus didn't use his divine omnipresence to teleport himself to safety. He remained passive. He allowed himself to be humiliated. **"And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."** Jesus stayed on the cross and saved you. The Lamb of God was your substitute and died in your place for your sins. And at your baptism, Jesus washed away your sins. So now when God looks at you, he not only sees Christ's righteousness, but he doesn't see any of your disobedience. The old man is drowned. Jesus saves you by his active and passive obedience. Jesus gets you out of trouble with God and brings you back into his favor.

Our Gospel reading closes with the statement, **"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."** If you're a child, just like Jesus, you'll continue to grow in stature. But as a baptized child of God, whether young or old, you also grow in wisdom and favor with God and men. Just like Jesus, your new man obeys your parents and teachers and earthly authorities. You're obedient to men but also to God your Father. Your new man comes to worship, studies God's Word, memorizes and meditates on it. Like Mary and Joseph, you bring your children to worship and amaze them with your godly wisdom in family devotions. Just like Jesus, you grow in wisdom and in favor with God and men. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.