

Jan Hus Presbyterian Church & Neighborhood House,  
December 27, 2009

"Where do we go from here..."  
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Readings:

**First Reading: Colossians 3:12-17**

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Gospel Reading: Luke 2:41-52**

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for 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. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

## Worship Notes:

So, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009. We're at the end of the "double O's." you know 2001, 2002, etc. Entering the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A time that will include our tweens and teens, in this century – if not necessarily for those of us who have seen those years before.

Today's gospel of Luke is a familiar; one we've heard before – and it's about Jesus in his tweens. It is the only recorded time that Jesus spoke, prior to his thirties and the beginning of his ministry.

If we take Mark to be the earliest of the gospels, the first words spoken about Jesus were by John the Baptist, who, when asked if he was the Messiah, is reported to have stated:

“The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

That's quite an introduction. Think, though, in the nativity narratives that we have just completed, we read that John the Baptist, still in the womb of Elizabeth, leaped when he heard Mary's greeting to her cousin. The gospels not only portray Mary and Elizabeth as close, but the children already communicating before birth. And, it seems, that the gospels also made it clear that Jesus was the one to be excited about, for it was not Jesus who leaped in Mary's womb at the sound of Elizabeth's voice, but the other way around.

It is likely then, that unless John headed off for the sack cloth and honey of the desert at a very young age, that he and Jesus would have had substantial contact and that John would have seen some of what Luke talks about in this morning's gospel, in terms of the ability, perhaps prodigy-like nature of the young Jesus.

We don't know. There are some narratives known as the Infancy Narrative of Thomas (Jesus's brother – some think twin) that purport to document some of the miraculous and, sometimes, unkind deeds of Jesus as a child and pre-teen. However, most believe that this was a pseudoepigraphical work, which is attributed to Thomas but written by others, who in this case built the narratives on Luke's gospel, attempting to satisfy the hunger for more information about Jesus. It appears that the hunger to know more about Jesus' youth was as strong, maybe stronger then, as it is now.

So, John talks about Jesus' greatness. Then, still before Jesus speaks, he comes to John to be baptized in the River Jordan. This time, according to Scripture, the skies open in some way and God is heard saying,

“You are my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Immediately following this, without any words yet spoken in Mark, the Spirit drives Jesus out into the wilderness, where he remained for forty days, tempted by Satan.

While Matthew and Luke have Jesus in dialogue with Satan, Mark has nothing, just the simple statement:

And the Spirit immediately drove him (Jesus) out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was wild beasts.

The first spoken words of Jesus recorded in Mark are after John the Baptist has been arrested, and Jesus takes up his witnessing, proclaiming the Good news of God, saying,

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news.”

The synoptic narratives begin to digress from one another, weaving in and out of proximity as each unfolds, but in all three, Jesus follows the arrest of John, at one point, arriving in the temple, reported to be lecturing the teachers, just as he did at twelve.

And the story begins to be told again...

Now if it was just about genius emerging in early childhood and continuing into adulthood with considerable consequence, Jesus might have been grouped with the likes of:

Blaise Pascal (1623 – 1662)  
Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)  
Marie Curie (1867 – 1934)  
Picasso (1881 – 1973)  
Jascha Heifetz (1901 – 1987)

But there was something more than genius here. This wasn't about Pascal's famous philosophical wager: "Pascal's Wager,"

which states that believing in God costs you nothing if you're wrong, and wins you everything if you're right.

No, this is about placing it all on the line, not as an observer, but as a participant. It is more than the corporate prayer that Annie Dillard affectionately refers to as the “dancing bear act.”

This is about “life in possession.”

This is not life being seen as simply a passive entity of form and time and unknown direction...but as an active possession to be given to form and time and in the direction of God, as Jesus did, and those who have followed him have tried to do ever since.

Regardless of the outcome.

Well, now ... that’s a bit edgy. I know. How edgy? Well, how did Jesus die? That edgy. And, we would all be right to be paused in our tracks a bit, as we come closer to the real risk involved in being faithful, moving away from the arm’s length pondering of a philosopher and his wager into the fray, so to speak.

For most of us, though, we’re going to be given a lifetime of awareness, in our broader lifetime of living, in which “where do we go from here” will become, has become...a way of living, participating, growing into to the myriad calls we serve – all of which emanate from the same teachings of the tween and the adult Jesus, as he grew, too.

It is this that Paul sums up for us, elegantly and most wonderfully in his letter to The Colossians.

Colossians 3:12-17

...clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Jesus has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Jesus, giving thanks to God.

Or, as Petersen in The Message puts it:

So, chosen by God for this new way of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you; compassion, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive and offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as God has forgiven you. And

regardless of whatever else you put on, wear love. It's your basic all purpose garment. Never be without it.

...and sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives – words , actions, whatever – be done in the name of Jesus, thanking God every step of the way.

You know, this takes time – it is a way of life, never completely done. And, even Luke reinforces that, when he talks about Jesus at twelve with all the answers and, yes, even a tinge of arrogance. He, too, learned to be what Paul is encouraging us, exhorting us to follow.

It's where we go from here, one day at a time, in all the ways we go.