



Luke 2:40-52

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And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. ⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." ⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. ⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

A few years ago, I stumbled across a sermon that was being delivered on this very text. The preacher was a Catholic priest, and his sermon theme was: "Jesus Christ—*Typical Teenager*." That was surprising to me because, after all, if I could use *any* adjective to describe Jesus, one of the words that I would *not* use is "typical." So, I had to listen to it, at least a little bit, because I didn't know how anyone could read this text and conclude that Jesus was a typical teenager.

The priest explained that the boy Jesus was acting rebelliously when His parents left Jerusalem. He decided that He didn't have to listen to His parents, so He stayed behind. "Typical teenager." And when He was caught and rebuked by His parents, what did He do? What any teenager would do! He talked back to them, He made excuses, He challenged their authority. "Typical teenager." And the priest continued on expounding on this premise, and I couldn't listen anymore.

He was wrong! First of all, because Jesus wasn't actually a teenager at this point—He *was* only 12. Second of all, and most importantly, everything this priest was saying about Jesus was simply not true. And the premise for that man's sermon was exactly the opposite of what the Holy Spirit is teaching us here in His Word. If we stick to the Word, we see that Jesus, rather than being "typical," was "atypical." That is, He was the *opposite* of ordinary. He was totally different, unlike every person who's ever lived. And that's a very good thing for us, because only a person who was "*atypical*" to the extreme could serve as the Savior of mankind. So, for our sermon today, rather than focusing on how Jesus is the same as us, we'll focus on how He's different. The theme we'll be considering is:

Jesus Christ – The Atypical Teenager

Amy, you're a bit older than Jesus was during our account. And maybe you're thinking that the point of my sermon today is that you need to be more like Jesus. You need to be just as dedicated to learning God's Word as He was, and you have no excuse not to be, after all, you're older than Jesus was in our text. But no, that's not our focus today. The truth is, you *cannot* be like Jesus, since He was the "atypical teenager."

We see just how different Jesus was from the first few verses of our text, where Jesus is described as being filled to the brim with spiritual wisdom and the approval of His Father in heaven. It was this boy Jesus about whom the Psalmist wrote when He said, ***“You are fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon Your lips; Therefore God has blessed You forever.”*** (Psalm 45:2) Now, Jesus probably was rather ordinary as far as His physical growth was concerned, but as for spiritual growth and wisdom of God’s Word—Jesus was unparalleled. He was *filled* with wisdom, and He jumped at every opportunity to continue to *grow* in His spiritual wisdom.

Well, what do you think, Amy? Are you like Jesus? Are you a vessel filled to the brim with God’s wisdom and grace? I know I wasn’t at your age, and I still am not. None of us are! That’s because none are “atypical.” We’re typical. We’re ordinary. We are common sinners. Rather than being like Jesus who always had His mind set from early-on to do His Father’s will, our minds are set on our own wills. We want to do what we want to do. And we take all of God’s abundant grace and blessing and we ignore it. We waste it. We fail to jump at every opportunity to hear God’s Word. We often figure it’ll be there for us tomorrow, so why take the time today.

We are typical. We’re not like Jesus at all. You see, not only was Jesus filled with grace and wisdom, He also stood before His Father as blameless. He had *earned* God’s full approval by the way He lived. And we are not the same. We have not earned God’s approval, nor can we hope to do so. But does that mean that God *disapproves* of us? Is God disappointed when He looks at you? No, not at all!

If it were not for our atypical Savior, God would have nothing to do with us for eternity. So, we can be thankful that Jesus was very different from us, that in every stage of His growth—youth, teenager, adult—He was perfect and without sin. He needed to be, and for your sakes, He was. The result is that Jesus earned not only His own approval before God the Father, He earned approval for you too. He was the atypical teenager who grew into the atypical man. He would suffer and die, taking His own perfection and handing it over to each of you as a gift. Now God looks at you as if *you* were perfect. All thanks to ***Jesus Christ, the Atypical Teenager.***

Now generally, when we run across something that is atypical, we can pretty easily ignore it. So, for instance, if you’re shopping online, and you’re interested in a certain product, you might start looking at the reviews. Let’s say you’re looking at a product with over 5,000 reviews, almost *all* of them 5-stars. But there is that one lone 1-star review. Will you pay much attention to that one naysayer? Probably not. That one review stands out as atypical from all the rest, so we pay attention to what all the typical reviews are—5-stars. We can usually safely ignore anything that is so atypical.

Well, Jesus was like this. He was different to the extreme, totally unique in all of human history. Does that mean we can simply ignore Him as being irrelevant to us? No, not at all. You see, Jesus *was* different, because even from childhood His sole focus was on His mission to save each of you. We see that here, He stayed behind in the temple listening and learning, asking questions. He’s doing what He described in our Old Testament reading, ***“Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.”*** (Is. 50:4) Even as a child, He is busy about His work being your Savior.

Evidently, Mary and Joseph had assumed that Jesus was traveling with their relatives, and it was only after a day of travel that they realized their twelve-year-old Son was not in the travel party at all. So,

they turn around, take a day to head to Jerusalem, spend the next day looking all over for Him, and only on the third day do they find Him in the temple, the last place they thought to look. Which begs the question, shouldn't the temple have been the first place they looked for Jesus? Martin Luther draws the interesting comparison from this text, when he says, "The first place, the *only* place to look for Jesus is in His temple, God's Word, the Bible."

Mary and Joseph eventually came upon Jesus by looking in the right spot, and we're told what they found. They found the 12-year-old Jesus sitting, listening, asking questions, and demonstrating His understanding through His answers. And we're told that all who were there were *astonished* at Jesus. The Greek word for "astonished" is kind of funny. Maybe you've seen a cartoon where a character gets startled so badly that his spirit jumps out of his skin and is startled above him. Well, that's sort of what the word means here—they were startled almost out of themselves.

And it's entirely believable. If a 12-year-old walked into our seminary classroom up in Eau Claire and began speaking as Jesus was, the seminary professors and students would be shocked. That's exactly what Jesus was doing here. He's asking questions with such great insight, the people were amazed and astonished. But it's one thing to ask difficult questions, it's another thing entirely to *answer* hard questions. But we see that Jesus had the answers as well, even as a young boy. And He still does.

Amy, I've asked you a number of questions today, and there are more questions still to come. And the questions won't stop today. As you enter into high school, difficult questions will arise. A few years after that, you'll be starting college, then that time will pass by, and the questions will continue to get harder and harder. "How can I pass this exam?" "How can I afford to pay my bills?" "How can I patch up this broken friendship?" They'll get harder. "How can I deal with this cancer diagnosis?" "How can I overcome this loneliness?" And one that you'll become very familiar with, "Lord, what have I done? How can I get rid of this tremendous guilt?"

Amy, when you face tough questions, remember that Jesus has the answers. And your atypical Savior does not give the *typical* answers. He doesn't say, "Don't worry, things will get better. I'm sure it will all work out." No, Jesus has *better* answers, after all, *He* learned so that He could "**sustain with a word him who is weary.**" (Isaiah 50:4) And you know where to find that Word; you know where to find those answers. Answers like Matthew 11:28, "**Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**" Answers like John 11:25, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.**" Answers like your confirmation verse, "**Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**" (Isaiah 41:10) Those are the types of answers that you will need, your whole life's journey. Atypical answers from an atypical Savior.

And so Amy, it is my prayer that even after today, you continue to seek Jesus in His temple, His Word. That you turn to Him for the answers to your life's difficult questions. And may the rest of us as well all trust in the Lord, knowing that He lived the most extraordinary life, so that typical sinners like us could receive the crown of glory from our Father in Heaven. Thanks be to God, in Jesus' name. Amen.

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7) Amen.