

**Luke 2:52 (Second Sunday after Christmas—Series B)**

**“Growing in Wisdom”**

**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT**

**January 3, 2021**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is from the Gospel lesson, Luke 2:52:

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

Here we are, three days into a new year. How are the resolutions coming? Have you made any yet? Started them yet? At this time in a new year people make all kinds of resolutions to make changes or to do things differently or better in the year beginning—lose weight, exercise more, eat right, listen to your parents more, keep your room clean. Statistically, most resolutions people make crash and burn before too long and don't last much past Valentine's Day. But I'd like us all to consider, not a resolution, but a recommitment. Can you and I, for the year of our Lord 2021, recommit to growing in the wisdom of God's Word?

Our Gospel text from the Word of God reveals Jesus to us at the age of 12. The reading begins with Luke's summary of what took place from when Jesus was 40 days old until He was 12: “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). The verse we are considering this morning tell us that at the age of 12, “Jesus continued to increase in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” Jesus was growing. Would we expect anything else? Between 40 days old and 12 years old, Jesus grew up physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. He grew in stature; He matured with His increasing age. Again, exactly what we expect. We are told in Judges 13 that Samson grew, and the Lord blessed him. Samuel also grew in stature and in favor with

Yahweh and with people. It's what children do. They grow up. How can it even be that my baby girl is going to be 11 in nine days? It is amazing that Jesus, fully God, now made flesh and dwelling among us, must grow and progress like the humanity He has joined.

But we also see Jesus who, as an infant was filled with wisdom, now at age 12 continuing to progress and advance in wisdom. What is that wisdom in which Jesus progressed? We get a big hint from Luke: "[Mary and Joseph] found [Jesus] 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." Jesus was listening, asking and answering questions, and speaking with the teachers about God's Word, especially as that Word was revealed in the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament.

Torah, which is usually translated as "law," really means instruction. Torah is God instructing His people through His revealed Word of both Commands and Promises, Law and Gospel. Now Proverbs 9:10 tells us, "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." How is it that people came to know the Holy One so that they might fear, love, and trust in God above all things? Through the revealed Word of God—the Torah, the Psalms, the Prophets. It is this Word of God that Jesus increased in as He grew in wisdom. And as Isaiah prophesied about Jesus, the Servant of Yahweh, "The Spirit of the Yahweh shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh" (Isaiah 11:2). And so Jesus as true man increased in wisdom as the Holy Spirit filled Him with wisdom and understanding from God's Word.

Seeing the example of our Lord, can you and I, for the year of our Lord 2021, recommit to growing in the wisdom of God's Word? I have to admit, that's a tough question. It's quite easy, like so many of the resolutions and commitments we make, to sit in a safe place and in a safe situation and say, "Sure, I can do that." What safer place and situation can there be than sitting in God's House with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and say before God and one another, "Yes, I will recommit to growing in the wisdom of God's Word this year"? But what happens to that commitment and that desire when we walk out of the door of this safe place? Who is going to hold us accountable to our promise? Who is going to follow up on our commitment and see if we are following through?

On the surface, it seems like such a sensible and easy thing for a Christian to commit to, growing in the wisdom of God's Word. Isn't that what we desire to do as faithful Christians? Isn't that what we committed to in our Confirmation vows? "Do you intend to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord's Supper faithfully? Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death?" To which we responded, "I do, by the grace of God." Hearing the Word faithfully and living according to it requires growth in the wisdom of God's Word. So if we are not hearing and reading the Word faithfully, we are not increasing in its wisdom. If we are not hearing and reading the Word faithfully, we cannot expect to live according to it. And isn't that often where we find ourselves?

We set out as children of God with the intentions to spend time every day with God's Word. Our desire is to grow in the wisdom of the Word which is provided to us in the sacred text by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, we all too often succumb to the temptation to spend

our time on other things. Rather than guarding and protecting our time in the Word, we “fit it in” when we can. Or, we let the cares and concerns of life filter into the times we have set aside, and so our time with the Word and our growth in the wisdom of that Word shrinks and shrinks. “Oh, I’ll have time before bed.” “Oh, I’ll fit it in later.” “I’ll catch up tomorrow.” But your head hits the pillow, later never comes, and tomorrow is filled up.

Does this mean it is impossible for us to really recommit to growing in the wisdom of God’s Word? Not at all! But it does mean that we need help—divine help, divine assistance which is already ours!

Jesus’ grew and developed perfectly as humanity’s substitute before our heavenly Father. He accomplished in His life what you and I cannot because of our sins. He grew in perfect wisdom and knowledge and understanding of God’s Word. Because He did, He not only knew God’s commands perfectly, but also accomplished them perfectly. He kept God’s commandments 100%, on our behalf. Where we fail to always hear and live according to God’s Word, Jesus didn’t. Where we fail to love God and to love our neighbor, Jesus didn’t. And that’s good news for us because Jesus’ perfection is credited by God to us. Because we are baptized into Christ, we are covered with the perfection of Christ. And because we are covered in the perfection of Christ, we are not condemned. We are not punished for our sins because Jesus was punished in our place. Jesus, the perfect wisdom of God Himself, was crucified and bore all our sins in His body on the tree of the cross so that we might have the perfect forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. “You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1Cor. 1:30). This is, in fact, the very wisdom of God’s Word. It is the message of salvation that is proclaimed in both

the Old and the New Testaments—Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God! (1 Cor. 1:24).

You and I have been made holy by the power of the Holy Spirit through the very wisdom of God in His Word. It is the Holy Spirit who has brought Christ to us in His Word. He has delivered the forgiveness and salvation won by Jesus to us through the Word. The Spirit has called, gathered, enlightened, and made us holy by this Gospel Word, distributing to us the gifts of Christ's cross and resurrection. Now He empowers you and me to recommit to growing in the wisdom of God's Word. God the Holy Spirit, working through His Word and Sacrament, enables us to be more faithful in our reading and in our hearing of this precious Word of forgiveness, life, and salvation in Jesus. The Spirit helps us to make time with the Word a greater priority in our lives. He empowers us with His gifts and encourages us to take just a few minutes a day handling the Word of God—reading a Psalm or a Bible verse that is special to us.

The good news about our recommitment to growing in the wisdom of God's Word is that we have God Himself helping us, enabling us, and encouraging us the whole time! In fact, it is God Himself through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit who gives us the growth of wisdom and faith. For the wisdom of God through His Word is the gift of God to us through His Spirit. In Christ, we have received "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh" so that we can recommit to and grow daily in the wisdom of God's Word. Amen.