

Some Moments are More Important than Others

1. The birth of a child is reason to celebrate that date every year.
 - a. Americans usually celebrate graduations, weddings, or the death dates of a close loved one.
 - b. Something we have lost in our culture is entrance into adulthood.
2. In our culture, we delay adolescence well past what was normal for Jesus' day.
 - a. Puberty, in both boys and girls, signified the changing over from child to adult.
 - b. For a Jewish family, fathers had a responsibility to begin teaching their sons the Torah by puberty.
 - c. 12-13 was a common target.

3. Therefore, 12 was a time that a boy's responsibility to visit Jerusalem at one of the feasts began.

a. At age 13, a boy became a man and was responsible for keeping the Law.

b. This background and culture set the stage for Luke 2.

4. Luke covers Jesus' life from birth till his ministry all in chapter 2.

a. Tucked into this chapter is a story we normally don't associate with Christmas.

b. But I would like to draw our attention to a less familiar part of Jesus' early life.

› Scripture

Luke 2:41–43 (CSB)

Every year his parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival.

When he was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the festival.

After those days were over, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

› A few thoughts for us today.

This was probably Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem since he was circumcised at 8-days old.

His family went up every year, but that does not mean the children travelled with them.

- a. It was highly dangerous for Jesus to travel to Jerusalem, especially under the reign of King Archelaus.
- b. Remember, the Herods and his leaders had try to kill him in his youngest years and that threat hadn't diminished until Jesus was around 10 years old.
- c. Furthermore, travel was very different in 1st Century as was the family dynamics.
 - i. The idea of leaving for the city and not bringing your kids was not unthinkable.

- ii. We don't know for sure.
- d. This could have been Jesus' first Passover celebration in Jerusalem.
- i. If it wasn't, it was his first at what is called the "age of discernment".
 - ii. It was his first visit at what would be considered an adult.

What is Passover?

Deuteronomy 16:1-6 CSB

“Set aside the month of Abib and observe the Passover to the LORD your God, because the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night in the month of Abib.

Sacrifice to the LORD your God a Passover animal from the herd or flock in the place where the LORD chooses to have his name dwell.

Do not eat leavened bread with it. For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread with it, the bread of hardship—because you left the land of Egypt in a hurry—so that you may remember for the rest of your life the day you left the land of Egypt.

No yeast is to be found anywhere in your territory for seven days, and none of the meat you sacrifice in the evening of the first day is to remain until morning.

You are not to sacrifice the Passover animal in any of the towns the LORD your God is giving you.

Sacrifice the Passover animal only at the place where the LORD your God chooses to have his name dwell. Do this in the evening as the sun sets at the same time of day you departed from Egypt.

1. Passover celebrates the Lord bringing Israel out of Egypt.

- a. It was the meal eaten in haste.
 - b. They ate the “bread of hardship.”
 - c. There were bitter herbs served with the meal, reminding them of the bitterness of slavery.
 - d. Each year, they sacrificed the Paschal lambs, and the Temple flowed with the blood of sacrifices.
2. All of Israel was to participate in celebrating what God had done in the past.
- a. They were no longer slaves in Egypt.
 - b. They celebrated their God’s triumph over the gods of Egypt and how He made a mockery of them.
 - c. In a sense, each time they celebrated Passover, regardless of who was in charge, they proclaimed God’s power.
 - i. Yes, Rome had occupied Israel.
 - ii. But God was on the throne.
 - iii. The gods of Rome and Greece might have been fixtures in every city, but the LORD would bring true freedom when the Messiah would arrive.

3. Passover was a time of great celebration.
 - a. Large crowds, crying Hosanna.
 - b. The city would swell with tens of thousands of people and the animals for sacrifice.
 - c. As the people traveling entered the city, the crowds would sing and shout and celebrate.
4. To visit Jerusalem for Passover, like Joseph and Mary were, would have been:
 - a. Costly (buying provisions for the journey, the purchase of sacrifices.)
 - b. Hard, since they travelled on foot for many miles.
 - c. Exciting as the thousands of people gathered, singing songs and Psalms and worshipping the Lord together.

Luke may not have recorded every time Jesus went to Jerusalem.

1. But he does tell us of three in his Gospel:
 - a. His circumcision,
 - b. His visit to Jerusalem at age 12.
 - c. And then, starting in Luke 9 and going through the rest of the book, Luke tells of Jesus journeying toward Jerusalem to be the Passover Lamb.
2. His earthly father and mother brought Jesus to Jerusalem in the first two
 - a. His heavenly Father led Jesus in Luke 22.
 - b. In each of the visits, Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem in obedience to the Law.
 - i. The Law said that he was to be circumcised at 8 days.
 - ii. The Law said that he was to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem.
 - iii. The Law said that a spotless lamb had to be presented in Jerusalem for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus in Jerusalem.

1. Here, on this first trip, Jesus celebrates the Passover with His family.

2. Luke 2:42-46

3. When he was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the festival. After those days were over, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming he was in the traveling party, they went a day's journey. Then they began looking 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.

a. After the sacrifices and celebrations, Jesus goes to where the Sanhedrin is meeting.

b. There he is teaching and learning the Law with the scribes and elders.

c. With amazement, the elders listened to Jesus and His answers. Vs. 47

d. The knew that this was no ordinary young man.

4. I have questions about this.

- a. While listening, was Jesus thinking back to the giving of the Law to Moses, with the fire and smoke and Presence of God on the mountain?
- b. Was Jesus thinking about the first Passover in Egypt, when the destroyer came upon all who rejected God?
- c. Did Jesus know at the age of 12 that, in 20 years, He would enter the city with the throngs of people crying Hosanna?
- d. Did Jesus know on this visit that some of the men in the crowd would cry for His blood? And, possibly, would help bury Him?
 - i. One Commentary mentions the possibility that in attendance at that day with the boy Jesus, “Symeon, Gamaliel, Annas, Caiaphas, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea are possibilities.”
 - ii. Can you imagine!
 - 1. Jesus sitting with His future accusers, like Annas and Caiaphas,
 - 2. Or future worshippers like Nicodemus and Joseph!

e. How much did Jesus know?

i. He was both fully God and fully Man.

ii. What was shared with Him and what was hidden?

5. What did the teachers think of the 12 year-old who spoke with such wisdom and amazement?

a. Did they sense who He was?

b. Did they know what He would do?

c. Were they like Anna and Simeon earlier in Luke 2, who prophetically saw who Jesus was and what He had come to do?

d. Or did these teachers, the most educated in the land, dismiss him?

6. I can't help but ask myself, How often do I miss God's presence in my own life?

a. Do I miss Him when He comes in forms I didn't expect or want.

b. We expect Him to overwhelm us with His appearance, but when He shows up in a plain, ordinary way, are we quick to dismiss?

c. Isaiah prophesied this about Jesus:

| Isaiah 53:2–3 (CSB)

| He grew up before him like a young plant
| and like a root out of dry ground.

| He didn't have an impressive form

| or majesty that we should look at him,

| no appearance that we should desire him.

| He was despised and rejected by men,

| a man of suffering who knew what sickness was.

| He was like someone people turned away from;

| he was despised, and we didn't value him.

› Here in Luke 2, we read of Jesus celebrating the Passover. But He was no ordinary participant.

The Passover of the OT tells of the destroyer “passing over” the first-born sons of Israel when He saw the blood of the lamb over the doorpost.

1. But later in Luke, Jesus, the only begotten Son of God and the firstborn of Mary and Joseph, will not be passed over.

a. In the final chapters of Luke, we read of Jesus' last Passover.

i. How he broke bread with His disciples.

ii. How he met in the Temple everyday, being examined, tested, and tried and found without spot or blemish.

b. Then, Luke records Jesus dying on the cross receiving the punishment for our sins.

i. The sinless Lamb of God, slain upon a Cross.

ii. And, although Israel had entered Jerusalem to celebrate their ancestors deliverance from slavery in Egypt,

iii. Jesus entered Jerusalem to deliver them from the power of sin and death.

2. If we separate Christmas from Easter, we only have part of the story.

a. If we forget the reason why the Son of God put on human flesh, we can easily miss the reason why we celebrate.

b. We celebrate not because a virgin has given birth but because she gave birth to the Son of God.

c. We celebrate the Son of God giving His life to fulfill the echoes of a plan put in place long before and prophesied in books like Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Leviticus.

d. When I think of Jesus at Christmas, I can't help but jump forward to the Cross and the Empty Tomb.

What does Christmas mean to me?

1. Of all the aspects of Christmas we could reflect upon, this morning I'm thankful for Jesus' sacrificial love.

a. Because God loves us, He sent His Son.

b. Because God loves us, Jesus went to Jerusalem as the sacrifice for sin.

c. Because God loves us, we enter this season with a reason to be thankful, hopeful, and joyful.

i. Though this may be a hard season, Christmas reminds me that God's love shows up most often in hard seasons.

ii. And someday, Jesus is returning to Jerusalem.

iii. This time, not as an 8-day old baby or a 12-year old teenager, or as a sacrifice for sins.

iv. He is coming in power, to right the world, to restore justice, punish sin and reward righteousness.

2. A Good question for me today: Am I watching for Jesus?

a. To be honest, I would probably have missed his arrival in Bethlehem.

b. To be honest, I would have probably been so busy making sure my argument was right that I would have missed the young Jesus in the midst and the significance of that moment.

c. To be honest, when Jesus entered Jerusalem the last time on a donkey's colt instead of a white horse, I would have missed him there too.

d. So, what ways am I missing Him now?

3. This morning we are receiving communion and lighting candles.

a. Communion reminds of Jesus' purpose on Earth: to shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins.

b. Candles remind us that Jesus is the light of the world and we are called to proclaim that light.

4. But first, I want to ask you to turn your attention to a story told by Bro. Harvey as he shares a powerful true story of love in action.

