

January 2017

From the Pastor



Growing in the New Year

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the story of when Jesus went with his parents to Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. I am sure that he was going for his bar mitzva. Just as an aside, here is what it means for a child to become a bar mitzva (or son of the law).

Under Jewish Law, children are not obligated to observe the commandments, although they are encouraged to do so as much as possible to learn the obligations they will have as adults. At the age of 13 (12 for girls), children become obligated to observe the commandments. The bar mitzvah ceremony formally, publicly marks the assumption of that obligation, along with the corresponding right to take part in leading religious services, to count in a minyan (the minimum number of people needed to perform certain parts of religious services), to form binding contracts, to testify before religious courts and to marry.¹



You can read about the story in the book of Luke.

Luke 2:41-51 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

¹ Tracey R Rich, Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation, Judaism 101, Jewfaq.com, © Copyright 5756-5771 (1996-2011) at <http://www.jewfaq.org/barmitz.htm>, accessed 12/24/16.

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. (ESV)

I love that Joseph and Mary just let Jesus run around as all kids do with the other relatives. I remember doing that as a child myself. We would play outside for hours. Eventually Joseph and Mary realized that Jesus wasn't with them. They spent three days looking for Him; they finally found Him in the temple.

We are told that after Jesus and his parents had words, Jesus was submissive to them. I'm sure he treated His parents with the upmost respect in their conversation due to him being Jesus and him being submissive to his parents. It is the next verse, Luke 2:52 that I've been thinking about for us this year. Look at what it says about Jesus when He went home. This verse summarizes Jesus' life from age twelve to age thirty.

Luke 2:52 *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (ESV)*

There were four areas that Jesus grew in during His life. He grew mentally, physically, spiritually and socially.

As you look at 2017, let Jesus be your guide, and consider how you can grow this year in these four areas.

Mentally

What can you do this year to increase your knowledge about the world? Is there a book you've been planning on reading? Take time to read it.

Physically

What can you do this year that improve your health? This is always a hard one for me, but I have been doing better each year.

Spiritually

How does one grow spiritually? I think the answer is simply to try to get know God better. I always compare my relationship with God to my relationship with others. The things I do to get to know others better are some of the things I can do to get to know God better.

Socially

How can you improve your relationships with those around you this year? Is there a neighbor who just moved in who you should visit? How are things with your family? What can you do this year to improve things?

Here is your challenge for 2017. Grow, like Jesus, in these four areas of your life.

In Him and for His glory,

