

The Father's Approval

Mark 1:9-15

February 18, 2018

Read Mark 1:9-15

How many of you remember the great baseball player Henry Aaron? What was his claim to fame? He broke Babe Ruth's homerun record of 714 homeruns. When Hank Aaron hit number 715, I believe all the major television networks broke in for this historic feat. Aaron said, "I don't remember the noise of the crowd, or the two kids who ran the bases with me, or my teammates waiting at home plate for me. I remember my mother out there. I have no idea how she made her way through the celebration, but she did, and she hugged me and said I love you and am proud of you." That's what Hank Aaron remembers of that monumental event in his baseball career.

Few of us ever escape the desire to please our parents. For some people, it is the primary motivation that drives them to success. In our scripture lesson this morning Jesus comes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John and as he comes up out of the water, following his baptism, it says the heavens opened up and the Spirit descended on him like a dove and a voice came from heaven saying "You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased." The Message Bible reads – "You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life." Most of us were marked by our parent's love.

You have heard the expression "You are the apple of my eye." Do you know where that came from? The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible explains that the "apple of the eye" is an English idiom denoting the pupil of the eye. In Hebrew, apple literally means "little man" and presumably refers to the reflected image of one's self which the beholder sees in the eye of another person.

Jesus was the apple of God's eye and God was pleased with him. But have you ever wondered what Jesus had done during those eighteen years of silence on the part of the Gospel writers that so pleased God? Luke tells us about his birth, the visit of the shepherds, his dedication in the temple when he was eight days old, the journey to Nazareth, and twelve years pass and Luke records this short story of Jesus family going to Jerusalem for the Passover. When the festival is over, Mary and Joseph travels a full day's journey back home before they realize Jesus isn't among the extended family members of the village. They return to Jerusalem and searched for three days before they found him in the temple. He's asking questions and dialoging with the rabbis and astounding them with his knowledge.

I think Mary's a little angry and frustrated when she approaches him. "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been worried, and we've been searching everywhere for you." Jesus answered, "Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?"

Twelve years had passed since this child, born of the Holy Spirit, had come into her life. Could it be that Mary had been so involved in being a mother to Jesus that she had pushed those memories back in her mind? From a human perspective, perhaps she was preoccupied with the birth of her other children, with packing lunches for school, clothes to make and mend, being a wife to Joseph. Parents of today can certainly relate to Mary's terrifying experience of losing a twelve year old in a big city, miles from home. Who would have thought to look first in the temple? After finding him the temple, talking with rabbi, and then hearing what he had to say about all of this, it says, "Mary pondered these things in her heart."

Eighteen years go by from that day when Jesus returned to Nazareth. Scripture says he was obedient to his parents and grew wisdom and stature and in favor with God and others.

Luke alone tells us that he was about 30 years of age when he was baptized by John and affirmed by God. We are left to ponder about the events in his life as a teenager that had so pleased God. We can only imagine by looking at the young man he had become during those years.

I would ask our teenagers this morning, and we have several here, to think of Jesus as a teenager for a moment. Can you envision this? Do you think he raced around Nazareth on a fast donkey? Did he have any boyhood crushes on a pretty dark-eyed girl? Did he get good grades on his report card? Did Joseph die and

Jesus had to assume responsibility for Mary and his brothers and sisters as the eldest child?

So many unanswered questions. But whatever he did as a youth, God was pleased with him. What a wonderful challenge for our youth today. You don't have to wait to be a 30 something to be a God-pleaser. You can ask the question, every day, to every situation that comes up. What would Jesus do? It's a question that's not just for young people, parents and grandparents can ask that same question. What would Jesus do? When parents and grandparents approach each day and each circumstance and each situation with that question, their kids will too.

In order to graduate from high school or college you are required to pass certain testes to receive your diploma. Let me draw an analogy if you will. God sends Jesus to graduate school, to pass a symbolic test in preparation for his earthly ministry. In verses 12 and 13 it says, "Immediately the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals and angels attended him."

You will have to read Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 to get the full picture of his forty days in the wilderness. Mark was in too big a hurry to tell us. He uses the word "immediately" 17 times to keep his gospel account moving along. Then in two short verse we move through the forty days in the wilderness to the beginning of Jesus public ministry. Verse 14, "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God. "The time has come, The Kingdome of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News." His first sermon, was 16 words long, but it was enough. Some of you wish I could say it all in 16 words or less. We could go home early.

Let's go back and look at one verse and then we will go home. "And a voice came from heaven, "You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Those were the words that Jesus heard as he came up out of the water following his baptism and those were the words that were still ringing in his ears as he headed out into the desert for 40 days of testing and temptations. Those were the words that enabled Jesus to stand up to everything the devil threw at him.

Because Jesus knew that his father loved him and was pleased with him, he wasn't going to do anything that would jeopardize that relationship. He didn't need to succumb to the peer pressure of Satan. He need nothing of the riches and power that Satan had to offer, because he found completeness and total fulfillment knowing that his Heavenly Father loved him and was pleased with him.

Mom and Dad, grandpa and grandma, those words that God the Father spoke to God the Son are the same words our children need to hear from us. You are my son, you are my daughter, and I love you and with you I am well pleased. Those are words that only you can say to your children. You are my son, you are my daughter, I love you, I'm pleased with you, I'm proud of you, I'm thankful for you. You are the apple of my eye. Our children need that encouragement, that affirmation daily. When they know that, they can face about anything the world can throw at them.

I think of the tragedy in Florida this week. What caused the hurt in this young boy's live to cause him to hurt so many others? Had he ever been told that he was loved? Did he know that he had a heavenly Father that loved him? Had anyone ever shared the greatest commandment with him? To love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.