

Just Getting Started

Matthew 2:13-23

Introduction

I had a doctor's appointment the morning after Christmas. My blood pressure was at an all-time low of 80 over 50. I told them it was just the post-Christmas crash. Life had been very full the last four weeks, with the last four days being especially hectic. My body was just saying, "That's it. I'm done." Many times, when Christmas arrives, we have the sense of completion. All the preparations, gifts, parties and dinners are over. We can now rest. Of course, the Christmas season isn't over. We still have another week. Epiphany, which closes out the season, is on the 6th of January and we'll be celebrating that next week. Christmas is at the end of the calendar year, sort of the culmination of the year. But, in the church calendar, Christmas comes at the beginning of the year. The rest of the year is a celebration of the salvation story, with the Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension of Jesus, the church age and His Second Coming. We see today, for Mary and Joseph, things were just getting started for them as well.

Fully Divine

As with all babies, getting them born safely is only the beginning. A child is a life-long project. You're never really done, even after they've left home. The same is true for Mary and Joseph. But they had the added pressure of being entrusted with the health and well-being of the Son of God. After all, this wasn't just any ordinary baby. On February 2, we'll be reading these verses: *And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35)*. Before Jesus was born, the angel told Mary that in the future, people would call her blessed. When she presents Jesus at the temple, Simeon gives her insight as to what it will be like for **her, now**. Here are some of the issues they'd face since Jesus was God's Son.

Death Threats

First, His life was going to be in danger. Even as an infant, Herod saw Him as a threat and tried to kill Him. After Herod died, Joseph didn't want to risk living in Bethlehem, because Herod's son Archelaus was ruling there. So, he took them to Nazareth.

Independence

You're familiar with the story of Jesus at the Passover when He was 12. Mary and Joseph traveled for a whole day before realizing Jesus was still in Jerusalem. They backtracked and looked for Him for three days. They found Him at the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions (**Luke 2:46**). And what was His answer when she told Him how worried they were? *"Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49)*. At the age of 12, even before bar mitzvah, He had already put God's work ahead of everything else.

The Cross

The most painful part of the sword piercing Mary's soul was the day of His death. Mary lives through it all. She's watching her Son beaten, humiliated and crucified. It doesn't matter that this is how He was to live up to His name *Jesus* ("the Lord saves"). This is how He would save His people from their sins. His mother must watch Him endure it all. Her Boy, her firstborn.

Fully Human

Let's not forget that He's fully human. This means He lived the human experience to its fullness. He experienced everything we do, except He never sinned. Contrary to what we usually like to think, He cried when He was hungry, wet or sleepy. He may never have had a temper tantrum, but He had all the needs of a human baby. They would have had to change His diapers, feed Him, clean Him and rock Him to sleep.

Growing Pains

He would have suffered through all the growing pains our children do. He had to learn to walk and talk, eat solid food, daily hygiene and His lessons. **Luke 2:52** says that He *increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man*. This means He matured **mentally, physically, spiritually and socially**. And who had to be there to teach Him? Mary and Joseph.

The Cross

It was because He was **divine** that He suffered the cross, but it was being **human** that allowed that suffering and death to take place. Once again, we see this as the epitome of Mary's suffering with and for her Son. Humanity and divinity, it was all her Son. It was all the same to Mary.

Born Anew in Our Hearts

During **Advent**, one of the comings we prepare for is **His coming anew into our lives**. Here again, this is only the beginning. Some get the mistaken notion that Confirmation is an end in and of itself. I've heard of people raised Lutheran who just stopped going to church after Confirmation, because now they felt like they had all they needed. Confirmation is the foundation on which you build your life. Here's how Jesus born in our lives is just the start.

Under Attack

From the moment we have faith in Jesus, we're under attack by the forces of Satan, the world and our fallen nature. They don't want us to succeed as Christians.

Relationships

Being saved puts us in a new relationship with God and others. People must learn how to navigate relationships and both sides must work to keep it healthy.

Means of Grace

Our side of this relationship is to avail ourselves of the means of grace. Through Christ's body and blood, the Holy Spirit gives us the strength to grow in that relationship. We're **just getting started**.

May the peace of God,

*Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
