

*Sunshine and shadow* is the name of a quilting pattern that matches dark and light shades of the same color next to each other. Concentric rings of these pairs of colors move from the center to the outer edges of the quilt that is then finished with a broad band of solid color. The end result suggests movement between the sunlight and the shadow of our lives as well as creating a beautiful and warm covering for us.



Quilting is a process of stitching together small bits of fabric that are then bound to batting and then to a backing. The oldest known quilt was found in Mongolia and dates from the first century before Christ. Some people allege that quilts provided clues or directions to slaves seeking the Underground Railroad.

Often, groups of people quilt together, providing an opportunity for fellowship as well as help in creating the quilt. When I was at St. Peter's, Oxford MS, each year the Tutwiler Quilters came and hosted a sale of the quilts and quilted items that members of the group had made. These women lived in the Mississippi Delta, an area that is still one of abject poverty. Through their quilting they had fellowship and made items for sale that then provided money for food and other necessities for their families.

One of the necessities in Biblical times -perhaps tradition or expectation might be a better word – is that Jewish people traveled to the Temple in Jerusalem each year for the festival of the Passover. The Passover is one of the three great festivals of the Jewish faith. Passover commemorates the passing of the Angel of Death over of the houses of those Jewish people who had marked the lintels of their homes in Egypt.

For Christians, Passover is when Jesus entered Jerusalem prior to his death. In our tradition we refer to Jesus as the Pascal Lamb – the one who offered up himself for us and for our salvation.

The Gospel according to Luke contains the only story of Jesus as a young boy. If Matthew, Mark and John do not include this story, why is it here? What does it tell us about Jesus that Luke believed we needed to know?

*First*, the story reflects that Jesus was human. Jesus grew from infancy to adulthood just as we do. The fact that Jesus was human is something that we may forget by focusing upon Jesus as divine. We see bits and pieces of Jesus' humanity throughout the Gospel, when we read about his being tired or hungry, or his wanting time apart for peace and quiet after the demands of the crowds. We see his humanity in the shortest verse in the Bible: "Jesus wept."

But, most often, we focus upon those things that Jesus did that tell us Jesus was divine. Healer where no others had been able to heal. Raiser of Lazarus from the dead. And, his own resurrection following crucifixion. And, his appearances after the resurrection to the disciples and others.

*Second*, this story is a pivot point. It marks that point at which Jesus begins to pull away from his earthly parents. He is now focusing upon his destiny within his Father's house. Jesus is beginning to be known within the religious community as one who has understanding and wisdom. Jesus is beginning to be known as a teacher and resource for those seeking to understand the Torah and how it expresses God's will for them. The

passage we read today ends with the notation that Jesus “increased in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favor.”

Some Biblical scholars believe that age 12-13 is when a child was “weaned.” In this instance that means the age at which a child was expected to take on the responsibilities of adulthood. In Biblical times, there was no transitional time equivalent to our teenage period. One moved from being a child to being considered an adult. This age is when the person becomes responsible, *themselves*, to God and to follow the teachings of the Torah. This was the age when the young man took his place with the men in being counted one of the ten required to make up a “minyan” or group sufficient for worship. No more relying upon parents or other adults. Now you stand, yourself, responsible for your actions and attitudes.

Jesus grew in wisdom and grew in divine and human favor. Jesus models for us, then, how we ought to live. We ought to seek growth both with other humans and in our understanding of God. The two are intertwined.

*Favor* comes from the Greek word that means grace, gratitude, blessing or acts of gracious kindness.

We might read this passage in Luke as suggesting that Jesus grew in both human knowledge and knowledge of God, as well as in acts of gracious kindness. As one grows in knowledge of God and the teachings of Scripture, one hopefully acts in accordance with that learning. One hopefully exhibits gratitude for the many blessings of life.

*Third*, this segment foretells the Jesus we see later. It helps us know that the Jesus we see in his public ministry did not spring fully formed from nothing. Jesus grew into his public ministry over time. Jesus repeatedly goes to the synagogue or the Temple during his public ministry. Apparently this practice started at least by age 12. Jesus became a teacher with a great understanding of the Torah. He was able to answer questions with a real understanding of the purpose behind the words. Or, as we might say today, Jesus knew the spirit of the law as well as the letter of the law.

Jesus later focuses on the spirit of the law when he and the various religious leaders dispute what is permitted on the Sabbath. To argue for the spirit of the law, one needs to know the letter of the law- what was intended and what might be unintended consequences flowing from that initial, good, intention.

We also see in this passage from Luke that Jesus is obedient to authority. In this case the authority of his earthly parents. When Mary chastises him for causing them anxiety, he responds but then he also goes with them to Nazareth and was obedient to them. Later on we will see Jesus being obedient to his Father when praying in the Garden of Gethsemane – “not my will, but yours, be done.” Jesus is secure enough in whom he is and what he is called to do that he can offer up obedience when appropriate.

We see in this passage the shadow and sunshine of life. Jesus in sunshine listening to leaders and questioning them. Jesus comfortable in responding to questions and in becoming one with a deep understanding of scripture. We see the shadow in Mary’s and Joseph’s anxiety when they could not find their son. Both sunshine and shadow connected because that is life. Accepting the shadow as part of what makes the sunshine so meaningful. Pondering, like Mary, those things that surprise or confound us.

This second Sunday of Christmas is a time to continue rejoicing in the birth of the Christ child. To enjoy the sunshine of new life brought to us in Christ. It is also a time to acknowledge that Lent, a time of shadow, is not

too far away. To be able to see and appreciate both sides of our life. To know that God is with us whichever we are experiencing.

In the brightness of the sunshine, we are called to examine those places in our lives that have shadows. We are asked to respond to those shadows with grace and gratitude for God's love for us. We will never, in this life, have extended periods without some shadow. But we do not have to be afraid of the shadows. We do not have to dwell on the shadows forever. The sunshine that was and is Jesus the Christ is with us now and always.

*Amen.*