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Comments on the Lesson
by Rev. John M. Smith
SUNDAY, JANUARY 16th

"The Boyhood and Youth of Jesus"
The boyhood and youth of Jesus are often spoken of as "the hidden years". From the gospels of the New Testament we learn something of his birth and a great deal about his ministry but only a few verses throw light upon the days of his boyhood. An understanding of the general mode of life of the period, however, helps us to visualize something of what took place in "the hidden years." We can imagine Jesus taking his part with the normal Jewish lad of his day. Along with them he would attend the Synagogue on week days when the Rabbi would teach them the significance of their great religious literature and heritage, and give them instruction in reading and writing. With them he would watch the caravans as they journeyed past and listen to the Roman soldiers chatting by the village well. Together they would play their games in energetic boyhood fashion and ramble over the hills and through the fields. No doubt he had his periods of play, study and home responsibilities just the same as other boys.

Growing into young manhood we can imagine him chatting with his associates about the current topics and entering into discussions on religious, social and political questions. According to traditional belief in these years of young manhood Jesus found himself carrying the responsibility of bread winner for his mother and the other members of his family. From his carpenter's shop he would look out upon his world noting the strength and weaknesses of human life with all its problems and sorrows, all its moments of joy and happiness.

Although there is little that is factual in our Christian literature about the boyhood and youthful years of Jesus there is general agreement that he knew something of a life of meagre circumstances and honest toil and that he was nurtured in the faith of his forefathers. In the words of that key verse of the lesson "The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him" — Luke 2:40. While Jesus in one sense was no ordinary child we believe that he experienced the ordinary physical and mental development with their accompanying problems and temptations in his growth from childhood through youth to manhood.

The Biblical Basis:
Luke 2:39-43; 46-52 Mark 6:3
We learn from these verses that Jesus was one of a fairly large family. Joseph and Mary evidently were devout parents, anxious to do what was right in God's sight and to fulfil the requirements of the law. We have the feeling that with them the spirit of that law was remembered and that the observance was more than ritual. The story of the boy Jesus in the temple is familiar to the most of us and from it we learn that he was a teachable lad. Not only was he interested in listening to the words of the learned men but he asked them questions and revealed his knowledge and wisdom in his answers to their queries. It seems that on this occasion he became more aware of his relationship to his Heavenly Father that he had been before and revealed something of that awareness in his question "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" However strong this revelation might have been it did not cause him to immediately leave his home and his family. He returned to Nazareth with his parents and "was subject unto them", obeying them and abiding by their parental teachings and controls as a dutiful child.

From this Temple experience at the age of 12 to the beginning of his ministry are years of obscurity in the life of Jesus. Luke has described the further development of the boy into manhood in these words "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Here we see a four fold development, mental, physical, spiritual and social. Such a balanced development prepared Jesus for the strain of the world's greatest and fullest ministry crowded into a period of from two to three years.

The Application:
The world is calling for the best of citizens. Boys and girls must be ready to answer the call. More important God still calls men and women to his service. The youth of the day ought to be preparing to respond to the Divine challenge. This preparation can be directed and aided by God fearing and devout parents who will nurture their children in the ways of God, and by consecrated teachers of youth who see more to their task than the imparting of knowledge. However the growth into good Christian citizenship cannot be forced from without. The development must come as a response on the part of the individual. A boy's chief business in life is to grow. All that he does should add to his development. Parents, teachers,



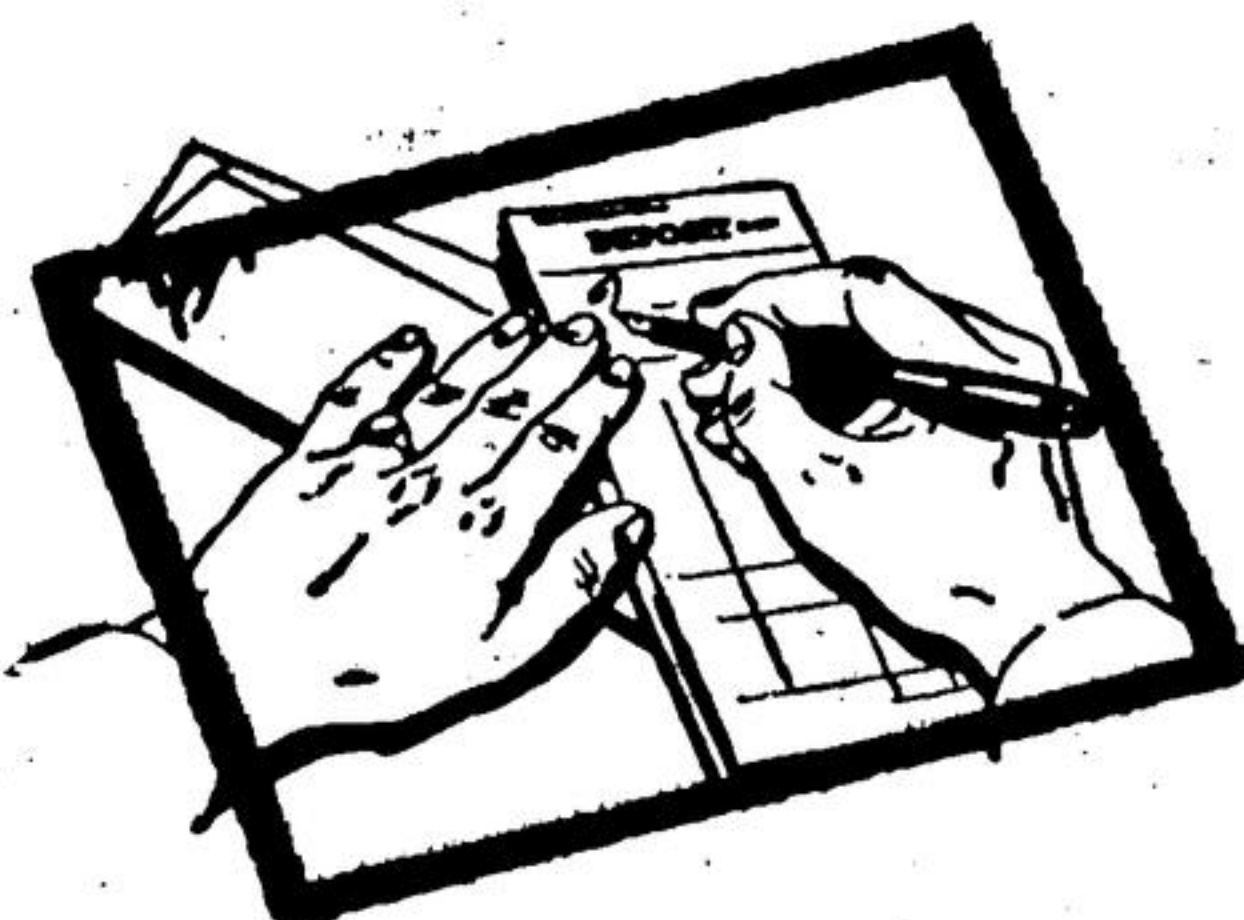
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and boys in full cooperation should — mental, physical, spiritual and strive for a four-fold development social. To emphasize one side of this fourfold development at the expense of the other is to produce lopsided lives. It is the duty of home, school, church and nation to see that well balanced citizens are produced.

Helpful Quotations:
"The laws and processes of ordinary human life must have been left to mould and form His manhood — the same habits of inquiry, the same need of the collision of mind with mind; of patience dur-

ing long expectation; of reconciliation to home duties and daily self-interests; of calm strength that leans only upon God."

"True religion is the surest and most important kind of growth because it includes and affects all other kinds of growth and so of all things in life a boy can least afford to neglect the development of his religious life if he desires to grow to complete manhood."

"Until a boy has found his duty, and until a sense of duty has found and possessed him, his life starts from no beginning and it proceeds toward no end."
Four things a man must learn to do

If he would make his record true. To think without confusion clearly, To love his fellowmen sincerely, To act from honest motive purely, To trust in God and Heaven securely."

"Life beckons me to eager quest To love, to laugh, to work, to play To serve, to sacrifice, to pray: He calls—and He shall have my best!"

"For when the one great Score comes To write against your name, He writes not that you won or lost But how you played the game."