

My Father's Business

Twelve years of age is often given as one of those times in life when young men and young women mark a transition between their childhood and the adulthood that they are growing into. And while the exact age does differ somewhat with each child, around twelve years of age seems to prove out to be an average time that those changes do begin to take place.

God's chosen people, the Jews, have a special ceremony that they observe in the early years of their children. The ceremony is called "Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah", and it is a "coming of age" ceremony for Jewish boys and girls when they reach the age of 12 or 13. That ceremony is intended to mark the time when a boy or girl becomes a Jewish adult. And it means that they are now responsible for their own actions.

In our scripture text for today, beginning in verse 41 of Luke chapter 2, we find a special event taking place in the life of the Lord Jesus. He was twelve years old at that time. We don't know if His age of twelve has any significance to the timing of this event. God doesn't tell us that. But it is a curious timing that takes place in the life of the Lord Jesus.

Let's read about it and ask the Lord to give us all that He intends us to gain from these words! Verse 41, of Luke chapter 2 . . .

41 Now his (the Lord Jesus) 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 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 about my Father's business?" 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.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:41-52)

We don't know much about the childhood years of the Lord Jesus. Many people have speculated about them. There are even some books that were written during the early years of the church, claiming to describe Jesus' early childhood. But no one really knows. And because God limits His record of those years to what we read here in these scriptures, I believe that it is appropriate to accept that God only wants us to know these few things that are recorded here. And so, we begin our knowledge of the Lord Jesus when He was twelve years of age.

A curious thought that comes to my mind as I read these words . . . "How much did Jesus really know about Himself, even at age twelve?" What knowledge did He bring with Him into His birth? Yes, these scriptures tell us clearly and plainly that Jesus was fully human, but they also tell us that He was fully God. Isn't it curious to consider what this twelve year old boy knew about Himself and about God?

Yes, as we read here, His parents were dedicated believers in God. They brought Jesus to the temple each year for the "Feast of the Passover". So, He was learning from the good teaching He was receiving. But did He also know that someday He Himself would actually be the Passover Lamb that would save His people from their sins?

We don't know the answer to all those questions, but we do know that something special was going on in His heart and mind at His young age. He knew that God was His true Father, and as He spoke with the Rabbis, His questions and His answers amazed them.

As I relate this circumstance spoken about here, to our own lives in our own day, I know that we as parents are to do as Jesus' parents did. We are to know the truths that are given in these scriptures, and as we are instructed in Deuteronomy 6, we are to teach them diligently to our children, as they lie down, as they rise up, and as they walk along their way.

Why is that so? For many Godly reasons! Among which is the simple fact that children cannot and must not be left on their own to learn the good and right things of behavior for themselves. And especially, they must not be left on their own to learn the truths of God. We must teach them.

All through their growing years, children are learning and changing. And those changes are by God's divine design. Childhood is a time of innocence, but it is also a time of foolishness within the hearts of young people. It is a time when parents need to be very deliberate in the training of their child and to, whenever necessary, show a strong hand in the child's discipline.

As we studied just recently, the words of Proverbs 22:6 instructs us as parents to,
⁶Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

And in Proverbs 22:15, God tells us exactly why we are to give our children that training, and not fail in our efforts. There we are told that,
¹⁵Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)

Regardless of what the voice of today's culture calls out for us as parents to do, children are still children, and in many ways, they are all alike. They are unlearned and they are in need of training, instruction and correction. And all of that is best done by their parents.

Why is that so? For many reasons, the most important of which is, as we mentioned a moment ago, God has appointed that task specifically to us as parents. It is our job, no matter what the other pressures of life demand. But also, it's because parents are the ones who have first built up a relationship with their child. Children trust relationships first, then they trust instruction and discipline.

But unfortunately, in today's culture of divorced and struggling families, Moms and Dads often get their responsibilities mixed up and they falter in the "design" that God has laid out for them. And when that takes place, it is inevitable that their child will suffer great loss. And that loss will continue all of the days of the child's life.

Truly, the responsibility for the success or failure of a child rests squarely upon the shoulders of the parents. And we, as parents, must somehow swallow our arrogant pride and accept that responsibility.

Yes, we do often struggle, sometimes a great deal, as we try to fulfill all of the requirements of life, building our careers, participating in friendships, hobbies and community needs, but none of that gives us reason or excuse for the failure to train up our children.

Looking back over the many years that have come and gone in my own family, I can say without hesitation, that every wrong behavior that I see taking place within the lives of my children can be traced directly back to my own failure as a father.

Here in today's scripture, we are given a glimpse at a few short days in the lives of Mary and Joseph, as parents, and at Jesus as a twelve year old child, just entering into His own special time of transition in life.

Jesus was changing from being a boy to being a man. And being fully human as well as being fully God, He perhaps had not thought to tell His mom and dad that He was sensing a strong need to be in the temple, learning things about the deeper truths in the scriptures.

And we know that that change was truly taking place in Jesus' life because of the things we see that He was doing. When His parents returned to find Him, they did not find Him playing in the streets with the other little children as He might have done in years past. They instead found Him sitting and listening attentively to the teachers in the temple, learning about eternal matters of God His Father.

And not only that, the questions that Jesus was asking, and the responses that He was giving back to those teachers were oddly insightful, so much so that the teachers are said here to be "amazed". Jesus was indeed changing from being a child into being a man.

And again, I wonder if at that time He sensed that He would be a man like no other man, that these words He was learning from the rabbis were mysterious truths that would set Him on a special pathway to the salvation of the souls of all mankind. I truly wonder.

And again, we do know that Jesus had some measure of understanding of His special calling because of those words He spoke back to His parents when they found Him there in the temple. He said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

May I say again that yes, Mary and Joseph were Jesus' earthly parents. But by the compelling unction of the Holy Spirit, Jesus also knew that He had a true Father that was not of this earth. He knew that His true Father was God the Father in heaven.

And I am convinced that He had heard the mysterious voice of His heavenly Father calling out to Him to come to the temple and to learn of Him.

And while yes, as a child of this earth, Jesus must always remain obedient, honoring His earthly parents, He knew also that He must, at the same time, be obedient to His Heavenly Father.

Here again, as we have noted in earlier messages, the responses that people give to their circumstances are so very important, and those responses must be the right ones.

As Mary and Joseph noticed that their beloved Son was missing from the returning caravan, they were concerned, perhaps even afraid that their Son had come to harm. And to add to their anxiety, it took three days to find Him. By which time Mary was overwrought, saying to Jesus,

"Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." (Luke 2:48)

Mary was obviously upset. And we would have been also. Though Mary should not have worried, she did anyway, not knowing that everything that this Son of hers would ever do would be different from the other children. And that would be so all of His life. His calling in life was so much, much bigger than anything Mary could have imagined.

And contrary to the way this incident may look to us, Jesus was not defying His earthly parents in order to be in obedience to His heavenly Father. A simple demarcation was being put into place, an incident that God would use to give further indication to Mary and Joseph that, just as they had been told by the

angels from the beginning, this young Son of theirs truly was very, very different from other people, and He would begin to behave in a very different way.

As it is with each of us as parents, God equips us for the task of training up our children. And, no doubt, Mary and Joseph had been equipped to teach Jesus rightly as He grew and matured. And I must say that I believe that they were also probably given some special knowledge and insight that might not always be given to people like you and me. That is because their young man was a very special young child.

And we get some confirmation of their special teaching as we read the words here in verse 52 that tell us,

⁵² . . . Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:52)

Note also, the response of the Lord Jesus given to us in verse 51!

⁵¹Then He (Jesus) went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. (Luke 2:51)

Here, God is revealing a very special character quality present within Jesus that is essential to everything that He would ever do, the character quality of "humility". Here we are told that Jesus, very willingly, went back home with His parents and was subject to them.

Already, Jesus was sensing a special difference deep within His soul, but still He did not make demands to be treated differently. He instead simply "humbled" Himself and became subject to His parents.

Let me say, without reservation, that I believe that "humility" is the most important character quality that is present within Jesus. And say further that that same "humility" is the most important character quality that can be present within you and me.

Imagine this for a moment, Jesus, the very one who had created and put into motion all the matters of life and creation, but yet, He chose to simply humble Himself and to be subject to two of the very creatures He Himself created. Jesus' humility was truly one of the most powerful attributes that compelled the events of His life.

And as we read further in the scriptures, especially in the words of Philippians chapter 2, we find that humility was the compelling force that carried Him even to the cross. Listen!

Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

Why is "humility" so important? Why was it important for Jesus to humble Himself, to bring His own wants and desires, His own plans, and especially His own moment by moment emotions under submission to not just God His Father in heaven, but even and especially to His earthly mother and father, Mary and Joseph? Why was, why is, "humility" so important?

Folks, "humility" is profoundly important because "humility" is the exact opposite of the one thing that these scriptures define as the most common of all sins, that of "pride". To use the words of Oswald Chambers, "pride" is best seen in the demands that you and I make as we lay "claim to our right to our self".

And that kind of pride truly does seem to be the most common of all sins. As I make "claim to my right to myself", I deny the Lordship of Christ, and I separate myself from all other authority that would rule over me, including God in heaven and even my parents here on earth.

"My claim to my right to myself" says to everyone watching, "I am my own man, no one will be allowed to rule over me and control my behavior". I am the ruler of my own soul.

That was the special sin that satan first committed when he and his fallen angels turned against God and were cast out of heaven. And that was the sin that Adam and Eve committed in denying God's Lordship over them and choosing to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

And unfortunately, that has become your and my most common sin. It might manifest itself differently in each of us, but it is still the same sin. And it is still as sinful and as destructive to our souls.

But listen! In His “humility”, Jesus turned away from any and all claims to His right to Himself. He did it as a child and He would do it as He grew into manhood. We are told that Jesus never once sinned, not even one time. He never once demanded “claim to His right to Himself.”

You will recall that on the night before He was crucified, as He struggled in prayer there in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to God His Father, “Not my Will, but thine be done”!

“Humility” is never easy folks. It is so difficult to surrender and to submit ourselves to others and especially to our God. But humility is truly the only way to Godliness. And it cannot be done halfway. Our submission must be complete and without reservation.

These scriptures tell us that we are to humble ourselves and to become a servant to all, even and especially to those who are not easily served, those who might even mistreat us.

Simply put, you and I are to have the same humility as the Lord Jesus.

One last thought! On that occasion there in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they were saying, in essence, “we want to be about our own business”. “We want to think for ourselves and make decisions about the things we want to do!”

But here, at twelve years of age, Jesus already knew Who He was, and what He was born to do. He was the Son of His Father in heaven. And the business that His Father had sent Him to accomplish had already begun. He had been sent to seek and to save those who are lost! And His training for that mission and purpose needed to begin, even at His early age. And He was getting about that Divinely appointed “business”.

And God, our Father, wants you and me to do the same, to get about “His business”. Listen as we close!

⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He

humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)