

Prioritize God

The Gospel According to Luke, Message #1

INTRODUCTION

Intro to the Series

Based on what we know, who is the most prolific penman in the New Testament? You would be correct if you said Paul based on the number of books. However, if we measure by sheer volume - whether the number of verses, words, or pages - Paul is not the most prolific penman of the New Testament. Based on sheer volume, Luke wins the prize for the most prolific author. Luke wrote two New Testament books, one in two volumes. The Gospel according to Luke represents the longest book of the New Testament, while the book of Acts, penned by Luke, represents the third longest book of the New Testament. Between them, we have nearly twenty-eight percent of the New Testament record.

Luke wrote both books to the same man, Theophilus, for the same purpose. Look at Luke 1:3-4.

BIBLE

“it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”

Luke 1:3-4 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.1.3-4.KJV>

INTRODUCTION

We have yet to learn precisely who Theophilus is. Regardless, Luke wrote to establish him in the faith.

Luke thoroughly presents the truthfulness of the Gospel. The Gospel according to Luke presents Jesus's work up to the ascension, and the book of Acts presents Jesus's work following the ascension through His apostles and His church. While complete as far as the canon of Scripture is concerned, Acts is incomplete as far as Jesus's work is involved. His work continues through His church, of which you and I are a part.

One writer wrote that "Luke's purpose was apparently not to provide a historical foundation for the Christian message. . . . He has 'ordered' the events of his narrative so as to bring out their significance, to persuade Theophilus—who is not so much concerned with the issue, Did it happen? as with the queries, What happened? and What does it all mean? By providing a more complete accounting of Jesus in His significance, Luke hopes to encourage active faith" (Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke*).

This is the way I want us to approach this book. Let us come curious, intrigued, and desirous to know what happened, what it meant then, and what it means now. For me? For my life?

Intro to the Message

With this brief introduction to the longest book of the New Testament, join me at the end of Luke 2. Why, if we are studying this book verse by verse, are we beginning at the end of the second chapter? We'll return to chapter 1 and the early section of chapter 2 as we near Christmas time.

Have you ever left your child behind or lost your child somewhere for a time?

How did you feel?

How did you expect to find your child?

At the age of twelve, this happened to Jesus.

Follow along as I read Luke 2:41-52. I will pause to make some comments along the way.

BIBLE

“Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.”

Luke 2:41 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.2.41.KJV>

EXPLANATION

The Law required Jewish males to attend three feasts each year: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles. This, the passover, is the feast of unleavened bread. The attendance of Joseph and Mary, a one-way trip from Nazareth of seventy-five miles, demonstrates their desire to obey God.

BIBLE

“And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.”

Luke 2:42 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.2.42.KJV>

EXPLANATION

Twelve is a significant age for the Jewish boy. According to the Mishnah, Jewish boys became responsible for their actions as adults at 13, but the instruction to prepare them for adulthood intensified at age 12. At this time, a boy also began to learn his father's trade to make a living and help support the family. This reality ties in with Jesus's statement later in the text.

BIBLE

“And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.”

Luke 2:43-44 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.2.43-44.KJV>

EXPLANATION

These pilgrims traveled in large groups, generally with women and children up front and men in the rear. It is not unthinkable that Mary would assume Jesus was with Joseph and the other men and for Joseph to believe He was with Mary and the children.

BIBLE

“And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.”

Luke 2:45-48 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.2.45-48.KJV>

EXPLANATION

While Jesus was in the Temple, astounding the religious leaders, Joseph and Mary sought Him out anxiously and fearfully. “Sorrowing” (v. 48) is used in two other passages in the N.T. It is used for the torment experienced by those in hell (see Lk. 16:24-25) and used to describe the response of the Ephesian church leaders when Paul told them that they would see him no more (see Acts 20:38).

BIBLE

“And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”

Luke 2:49 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.2.49.KJV>

EXPLANATION

So much in Jesus's response!

He questions not why or where they sought Him but how. It's as if He is saying, “Why did you not know where to find me?” and “Why did you sorrow as you looked?”. They should have known where to find Him and should not have been anxious and fearful.

By the way, do you know where to look for Jesus when you have misplaced Him? At times in our lives, we look for Jesus because we cannot see Him, feel Him, or hear Him. It's like we have lost or misplaced Him. When that happens, find Him where you know Him to be! It looks a little different than it did then, but you can see Jesus today. You find Him in the Word! You find Him in Prayer! You find Him in Worship! You find Him in the Father's house! Go to a Jesus-believing, Jesus-loving, Jesus-proclaiming church! They certainly do not have it all together, but you will always find Jesus in and among His people!

Then, Jesus identified at least three crucial points in His second question. First, He is the divine Son. Second, His mission is to fulfill the Father's will. Third, His relationship with His Heavenly Father must take priority.

BIBLE

“And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these

sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

Luke 2:50-52 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.2.50-52.KJV>

INTRODUCTION

In the text, Jesus sets an important example for us. From this young age, He shows what it is to love God.

We desire to grow in our love for God and others. We can learn from Jesus’s example.

How does Jesus set the example for us?

1. JESUS PRIORITIZED HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

EXPLANATION

Long before Jesus preached a message, performed a miracle, or even began His earthly ministry, He prioritized His relationship with God above other things - including other relationships. He lived out what He taught later as a requirement for discipleship.

BIBLE

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:26-27, 33 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.14.26-33.KJV>

EXPLANATION

Discipleship represents giving one’s first loyalty, love, and devotion. To be a follower of Jesus is to be loyal to, love, and be devoted to Him first. Jesus exemplified this by His commitment to the Father verbalized by Himself as a twelve-year-old boy in Luke 2. The first recorded words of Jesus were spoken to inform His parents that His relationship with His Heavenly Father must take priority.

APPLICATION

God does not desire you to hate your family, but He demands that you love Him more.

Honestly answer: What relationship is more important to you than your relationship with God? Is there any person who has more input and influence in your life than God?

ILLUSTRATION

“The greatest danger of idolatry comes not from what is bad, but from what is good - such as love in family relationships. The greatest threat to the best often comes from second best” (David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary*).

APPLICATION

Loving and committing to your family is good unless you love and commit to your family over Jesus.

We all need to draw a line in the sand. We can make or break our year of loving God and loving others right here, right now. If some relationship - be it with a child, a spouse, a parent, etc. - means more than our relationships with God, we are missing out.

Spouses, encourage your spouse to seek God, His kingdom, and His righteousness first. Support their pursuit of Christ. Pray for them to commit to and grow in Christ.

Parents, take an active interest in your children and teach them to worship and obey God above anything else. Encourage and support their choices to follow Jesus.

Young people, see that Jesus’s commitment to His heavenly Father did not cancel submission to His earthly parents. In reality, it strengthened it. At the same time, you yourself need to prioritize your relationship with God. Your parents’ faith will not get you to heaven, and your parents’ walk with Christ will not suffice for your walk with Christ.

Follow the example of Jesus. Prioritize your relationship with God.

2. JESUS PRIORITIZED HIS COMMITMENT TO GOD.

EXPLANATION

Listen again to this verse.

BIBLE

“And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”

Luke 2:49 KJV

<https://bible.com/bible/1/luk.2.49.KJV>

EXPLANATION

“...I must be about my Father's business...”

That was the focus of Jesus. His Father's business. At that moment, His Father's business included being in the Temple, where He worshiped God and heard His word proclaimed.

John 4 included going through Samaria, where He met and ministered to a cast-out Samaritan woman beside a well.

Luke 19 included the search for the lost to save them.

His Father's business culminated on a hill, just outside that place where He spoke these words. On that hill, He was nailed to an old rugged cross. There He shed His blood and laid down His life. He prayed, “Not my will, but Thine” in the Garden. But that heart was already beating in the chest of a twelve-year-old Jesus Who said, “I must be about my Father's business” (Jesus, Lk. 2:49). Jesus was committed to the work of God for Him. He went to the cross to secure your salvation. He asks you to take up your cross to follow Him.

APPLICATION

Are you committed to the Father's business? Honestly, answer: To what am I committed more than I am to God and His work?

Jesus was unique. His relationship with his heavenly Father was unique. His calling from God was unique. Yet, we, too, must be about our Father's business. God's mission for the world should be our mission. God's plan to redeem the world involves us all, and it must come first!

CONCLUSION

From this early age, with His first recorded words, Jesus showed us what love for God, above all else, looks like.

We desire to grow in our love for God and others. Love for God is demonstrated through following Jesus's example of prioritizing a relationship with God and commitment to God's work.

I love the challenge of the hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. Listen to how Isaac Watts puts this theme into words for this song.

Verse 1

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride

Verse 2

Forbid it Lord that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ my God
All the vain things that charm me most
I sacrifice them to His blood

Verse 3

See from His head His hands His feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did ever such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown

Verse 4

Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were a present (an offering) far too small
Love so amazing so divine
Demands my soul my life my all

ILLUSTRATION

“When I Survey” is a hymn which is saturated with theology and a call for an emotional response from the singer. This hymn was transformed into a statement of faith that crosses denominational lines and generations. According to hymn scholar Lionel Adey, the lines “All the vain things that charm me most / I sacrifice them . . .’ have a meaning personal to each singer, one that might require either action

or renunciation.” The three pledges at the climax of the hymn (“my soul, my life, my all”) are a sacrifice that had once been required only of those taking monastic vows” (<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-when-i-survey-the-wondrous-cross>).