

June 24, 2018  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: Luke  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Luke 2:41-52.

1. Was Jesus staying behind in Jerusalem disobedience or rebellion toward His parents?
2. It appears that Mary was frustrated with Jesus. Why?
3. What causes you to be frustrated and what is the right response toward such things?
4. Explain Jesus' response to His parents and what (if anything) it indicates was happening.
5. How could Jesus be fully God and not be omniscient?
6. If Jesus was dependant on the Heavenly Father's directing, should we not also look to Him for guidance?

**THE SON CAME TO DO THE FATHER'S WORK**  
**Luke 2:41-52**

Imagine you go to work one Monday, and you are introduced to someone who appears to be just another new employee. Later in the day you head to the work room to make copies and along the way, you meet new employee, Fred. Trying to be helpful you say to Fred, "Hey, why don't you come with me and I'll show you a few necessary tricks for operating the copy machine." To your surprise Fred says, "Oh, I'm not here to do that kind of work." Only then do

you learn that Fred is from corporate headquarters and he is on site temporarily to accomplish particular tasks assigned by the C.E.O. and company Board of Directors. Are you a bit embarrassed? I would be.

That is probably how Joseph and Mary felt when, after three days of frantic searching, they finally found young adult Jesus sitting in the temple talking to the official Jewish national teachers. They knew from messages relayed by Gabriel, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, the wise men, and we don't know how many others, that Jesus was special. They knew that He was actually the Son of God, not the son of Joseph. They knew that He was the promised Christ, the Messiah. But what did that mean to them?

Jesus' reply that it was necessary for Him to be busy doing something in connection with His Father might have embarrassed them or, as we would say, "Put them in their place." But that was Jesus' message many times after this point also. He regularly told people that He came in the Father's name (John 5:43), that He came because His Father sent Him (John 8:42), that He came to do His Father's will (John 6:40), that He came to do His Father's works (John 5:36). Jesus proved early on that He was on earth for one purpose: To do what the Father had sent Him to do. And that was going to become more and more obvious from the temple incident onward.

Sometimes we become so consumed with life, become so distracted with the passing and trivial things, that we forget that God is busy working out His eternal plan right now. His plan always includes people whom He created in His own image. Young adult Jesus was already busy doing His Father's work which left us with the Good News of salvation. The Good News about Jesus' work is supposed to be the theme, the governing truth of our lives. The Good News is supposed to be the one thing we desire for others to hear. The Good News is that God the Son came to do the Father's will. Tell someone about it.

**God the Son Lived in Typical Circumstances (vv.41-45).**

The next part of Luke's good news about our Savior is how the boy Jesus attended the Feast of Passover with His parents. From this brief account we can rightly assume that Mary and Joseph were

devout, God-fearing Jews who intended to set a good example. *Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover (v.41).*

As devout Jewish people, Joseph and Mary knew the requirements of the Law. Knowing the Law, they sought to fulfill the pictures drawn by the various feasts and sacrifices. But, did they know that the Law and the Prophets systematically paved the way for the coming Savior from sin who happened to be their son? Is what we refer to as the Old Testament sufficient enough Scripture to teach the good news, the gospel?

Here is an important point. When Jesus told the parable of the rich man in hell and the beggar in paradise, to what did He appeal as sufficient authority for the rich man's brothers to be saved? Jesus taught, *But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:29-31).*

Many years later when Paul was telling King Agrippa and Governor Festus about Jesus the Savior, he made the same appeal. *"To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23).*

And still to this day the gospel is plain enough in the Old Testament to teach that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior from sin. The Passover Feast more than any other feast of the Jews painted the perfect picture of Jesus Christ as the Lamb slain for the sins of His people.

By taking Jesus to the Passover Feast in Jerusalem, Jesus' parents taught Him how to keep the customs. *And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom (v.42).* At the age of twelve, the "Lamb" went with Mary and Joseph to celebrate the Passover. In more modern times (4<sup>th</sup> century AD), Jewish boys have celebrated a Bar Mizvah (coming of age) during the days just before they turn thirteen. It is doubtful there was any celebration like that for

Jesus, though at times a tradition recognizing the boy's coming of age was observed. It does seem obvious that in His culture, Jesus would be considered a young man capable of mature work and decisions.

On one hand, being fully human, He submitted to the requirements of the Mosaic Law. On the other hand, being fully God, did He, at this point, know what lay ahead for Him in that very city about twenty years later? Throughout the week of festivities Jesus would have seen symbol after symbol of God's deliverance of His people from bondage in Egypt. He would have witnessed, maybe for the first time, the significance of the slain lamb whose blood on that first Passover night saved the first born of the family from the angel's destruction. He would have heard the singing of the psalms of praise, participated in the eating of the meal, and heard the explanation of why the Passover night was different from every other night of the year. In fact, being twelve-years-old, it is possible that Jesus was privileged to be the one to ask the question to Joseph, "Why is this night different than all the other nights in the year?"

And God the Father was revealing more and more to God the Son about the need for the blood of the substitute lamb.

In that setting, the young adult Jesus frustrated His parents. He did something very important which they interpreted as very wrong. *And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem (v.43a).* The week of festivities ended and the entourage from Nazareth headed home—except for Jesus who stayed behind. This action cannot be interpreted as rebellion against His earthly parents because Jesus never sinned.

We should be able to understand what took place here based on what Jesus taught later. He told doubters, *"And he who sent me is pleasing to him" (John 8:29).* If that was the motivation in this case, Jesus stayed behind because it was His Father's will. This was a special case revealing the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. It is not a good idea for most twelve-year-olds to argue that it is God's will for them to do contrary to parents' desires.

Jesus' parents' ignorance caused them to be frustrated. All of us know what it is like to be frustrated. The reason we are frustrated is because someone, in some way messed up our plans, purposes, or desires. If it wasn't for frustrating people, we would not be frustrated,

right? Or is it a matter of response? Why do we choose to be frustrated when our plans are interrupted? Maybe the truth is that there are no frustrating people, but only frustrated people.

Mary especially was frustrated. The problem was, *His parents did not know it (v.43b)*. They were ignorant of what happened. Why didn't the parents know their child was absent? What kind of parent would leave Jerusalem for a five-day trip back to Nazareth without checking to see if their children were all in tow? It is possible that Jesus was not the only child of the family who attended. As we will see, even when they did know why Jesus stayed behind, they didn't understand.

According to the next verse, Jesus' parents acted on supposition. *But supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey (v.44a)*. We make suppositions when things are predictable. For example, if you show up to choir practice and sing in the choir every week for 10 years, we are going to presuppose that you will be here. If you are suddenly missing without explanation, someone is going to be surprised, if not frustrated. Suppositions can put us in difficult circumstances.

His parents tried to fix the problem. Realizing Jesus was not accounted for, Mary and Joseph *then began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him (vv.44b-45)*. It was logical to search among the relatives. The predictable circumstance for years was that the relatives from Nazareth all traveled as a group to Jerusalem. Of course, Mary and Joseph expected Jesus to be with the other kids.

### **God the Son Lived in a Relationship Difficult to Understand (vv.46-50).**

Instead of being headed for Nazareth, Jesus was astonishing the teachers. He was learning and asking. *After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions (v.46)*. This does not mean that His parents looked for Jesus for three days. Rather it is likely that they had one day travel out of Jerusalem, one day travel back to Jerusalem, and one day searching.

They found Jesus somewhere in the outer court of the temple. Mary would not be allowed in the inner court. Probably He was sitting on one of the porches where such discussion and teaching was common. He was listening to the teachers and asking them questions. We must not try to conclude that Jesus was exercising divine omniscience which really impressed the teachers. Rather, by this point in His human life, Jesus was well taught in Scriptures. Add to that the fact that He was no doubt a bright young man. Also, we must remember that Jesus was sinless, and we have no idea how that trait would contribute to young Jesus' astonishing wisdom.

At any rate, the young man's understanding amazed people. *And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers (v.47)*. It seems like Jesus attracted quite a crowd. Had He been meeting like this for three days? Where did He sleep and eat? (These are human kind of questions.)

The frustration came because Jesus' parents expected Him to live in normal relationships. Mary accused Jesus of mistreatment, even though His parents were also astonished at what they saw (v.48a). The word means that they were more than simply amazed. They were "struck out of their minds." What was their son doing astonishing the crowd and the teachers?

Actually what He was doing didn't matter much to Mary as she expressed her displeasure. *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" (v.48b)*. Jesus was not a frustrating child. He couldn't be because He never sinned. Mary was frustrated because of how she perceived Jesus' actions effecting her and Joseph.

The text informs us that Jesus' parents did not understand. They did not know that God the Son "*needed to be in My Father's \_\_\_\_\_*." That was Jesus' response to frustrated Mom. *And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (v.49)*. The text actually leaves the object of "Father" blank. Scholars and Bible studies supply words like "work," "business," "house" or whatever to help clarify. But the text literally says, "*. . . in the of the father of me it is necessary for me to be.*"

The Greek word translated know (*oida*) implied that Mary and Joseph should have known intuitively based on the information God had given them. Jesus did not give an unkind or sarcastic answer. Rather, this was a lesson Mary and Joseph were going to learn more and more often. Jesus was fully human, and, yet, He was at this point beginning to grow into His purpose and destiny. His relationship with His Heavenly Father was beginning to supercede His relationship with His earthly parents. Maybe this was more a case of Mary and Joseph coming of age than of Jesus coming of age.

We are not surprised to read that Mary and Joseph did not understand. *And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them (v.50)*. The Greek word for *understand (suneimi)* means to employ one's capacity for perception or insight in order to arrive at a sound conclusion. Not taking into consideration that Jesus was God's Son, Mary and Joseph could not put the circumstances into proper perspective.

Faith is the critical issue here. Mary and Joseph should have immediately responded with, "Oh, that's right! This is Jesus who will save His people from their sins." They needed to trust God the Father to direct God the Son correctly. That is rather easy to say—not so easy to do or believe.

### **God the Son Had to be an Anomaly (vv.51-52).**

On one hand, we read here that God the Son was submissive to humans. He lived submissively in a humble setting. *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them (v.51a)*. Jesus, the Creator, Messiah, and Savior went with Mary and Joseph to the no-name, insignificant town of Nazareth. God the Son, who willingly placed His divine prerogatives under God the Father's care, also willingly arranged His plans, purposes, and desires under the direction of Mary and Joseph.

On the other hand, mother Mary was trying to figure things out according to human wisdom. *And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart (v.51b)*. Since this incident is the last mention of Joseph, people theorize that he died shortly thereafter. And here we find Mary carefully, systematically packing away these things. She simply added this event to previous events and tried to connect the

dots. She had Old Testament Scriptures, but it is likely she could not make all the connections between her Son and the promises about the woman's seed crushing Satan (to mention just one such promise). She did not have all the amazing truths and information of the completed Bible. We have so much more information about Christ and so many more reasons to believe.

In that humble setting of Nazareth, God the Son grew physically and relationally. *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (v.52)*. It should be easy enough for us to understand Jesus increasing in stature and in favor with humans. Jesus experienced the typical growth through childhood to adulthood. That is the sort of thing that is said about John. *And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel (Luke 1:80)*. But notice that nothing is said about John having favor with the people. Maybe that is why he ended up all alone in the wilderness.

Because Jesus was fully human, He grew in size just like our children do. As He was a baby, Mary had to bath him, feed him, burp him, and do the same stuff all mothers have to do for their babies. As a child growing into his teen years, Jesus was very much like children we know. When He fell down, He skinned His knee. Did He cry? No doubt. Did He get angry? That is a good question. We know that as a man Jesus grew weary like we do, felt emotions like we do, and in most ways experienced all the limitations of human finiteness.

Jesus the Christ had to experience the fullness of humanity so that He would be able to bear our weaknesses. The writer to the Hebrew Christians wrote, *For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:18)*. *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15)*. Our Savior had to experience life as a human in its fullness without sinning once in order to be our Savior from sin.

Understanding the humanity of Christ stretches our intellect. Understanding His divine nature is more difficult yet, especially when we read that God the Son was increasing in wisdom and in favor with God. That is pretty difficult to grasp. That is the same thing that is said about Samuel. *Now the young man Samuel*

*continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man (1 Samuel 2:26).*

How did God in the flesh grow in wisdom? Just as the body of Jesus had to grow because He was fully human, so His mind had to develop. Jesus developed His human memory, intellect, reasoning capacity, emotionalism just like we do. This was happening as He was voluntarily submitting Himself to His own laws that He spoke into existence. Again the writer to the Hebrew Christians helps us on this matter. *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8-9).*

And yet, at the same time, He was fully God. Therefore, as an adult He would know the thoughts of people. He exercised miraculous powers over the normal laws of physics. It seems likely that Jesus did none of these things until after His baptism and after enduring 40 days of temptation by Satan.

And that still doesn't answer the question about how the Beloved Son could grow in favor with God? Favor is the Greek word *caris* (grace). Throughout His earthly ministry, God the Son received grace from the Father. The Father's grace sustained Him during the temptation from Satan, and by that grace, the Father sent angels to minister to Him. No doubt many times the Father revealed truths to Him by grace (not the least of which was while He questioned the teachers in the temple). A recognition of that grace is seen at His baptism as the Father declared publicly that He is well pleased with His beloved Son.

The incarnation of God the Son is a miracle that at some point(s) must eclipse human intellect and comprehension. Some humans struggle with this requirement and prefer to explain Jesus in human terms. They deny that He was God. Therefore, they deny His works and teaching. They conclude some pretty weird stuff.

Left to human wisdom, sincere followers of Jesus sometime in the mid-to-late second century attempted to fill in this period of Jesus' life. The result was quite unbelievable and even somewhat comical. According to *the Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, twelve-year-old Jesus cleansed a pool of water, brought twelve clay pigeons to life, struck dead the son of a scribe and also a boy who accidentally bumped into him, confused his grammar teacher with mystical

teachings, and healed a couple of boys who he had earlier blinded. According to this imaginary account of Jesus' boyhood years, he stretched a board that Joseph had cut too short and changed rude boys into goats, who he later restored after they repented.

The whole story of God becoming man must be grasped by faith. Luke and all Scripture writers leave us with the facts of Christ's incarnation. They don't always make the facts palatable to human wisdom. God simply leaves us with His inspired Word and asks us to believe Him. That is why the four Gospel accounts of Jesus' life are full of examples of faith, appeals to faith, results of faith. God's plan is for sinners to believe Him—to believe that Jesus is God the Son who took the sins of His people upon Himself on the cross in order to redeem us from the penalty and power of sin. Do you believe it?