

Gospel According to Luke
June 3, 2018
Reading: Matthew 2:1-23

Sermon #7
Luke 2:40-52

Jesus: “child” to “Son”

Luke’s primary concern in his gospel account is Jesus’ deity and his earthly ministry. I believe this is the reason Luke passed over what you just heard from the Gospel According to Matthew and also understanding that Luke had access to Matthew’s gospel account. Luke takes up the story of Jesus after his family had returned to Nazareth and Jesus was approaching manhood. Luke is the only writer to include this story of Jesus at age 12 and the Passover in Jerusalem. What is it we are to learn from this story? What does this story mean for our lives as believers today? I hope to answer these questions as we work through this passage. I believe you will see Jesus’ human life and spiritual growth are similar, in some ways, to our own. I will give you background information that should demonstrate the importance of why God wanted this story in His Bible narrative. This story reveals clearly that by the age of 12 Jesus possessed the knowledge of His divine nature and the mission given to him by God his Father. We will begin by laying the foundation with verse 40, then explore in depth verses 41 to 51 and conclude with verse 52.

Jesus: “child”

Reading from Luke chapter 2, verse 40, “*The child Jesus grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.*” Luke moves right past the magi, Joseph and Mary fleeing with young Jesus to Egypt and the slaughter of Bethlehem’s children. Luke’s statement “*the child grew and became strong*” indicates that Jesus was fully human – he grew in both physical stature, as any child does, and he grew spiritually. I would appear Jesus did not have

complete knowledge as an infant or young child of his full divine nature. There are many myths about Jesus speaking from the cradle and his breathing on a clay bird and the bird coming alive, but these are myths not based upon truth. Jesus grew as children do.

Luke writes, Jesus “**became strong, filled with wisdom**” this implies Jesus grew strong spiritually with the wisdom of his Father. Jesus’ coming to the earth as a human meant that he handed over control of His complete divine nature and he submitted to the Father and the Holy Spirit to mediate between his deity and his humanity. By the time Jesus had reached the age of 12 God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, had revealed to Jesus his identity and his mission. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus increased in wisdom as “**he learned obedience through what he suffered.**” (Hebrews 5:8) As Jesus grew both physically and spiritually he faced the world’s temptations as scripture states, “**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) Jesus was divine and we are not, but we also grow stronger in wisdom of God through the knowledge of God gained from the study of the Bible and seeking God through prayer. These practiced disciplines grow us spiritually to withstand temptation and enables us to sin less and glorify God more.

Verse 40 ends with, “**the favor of God was upon him, *Jesus.***” The apostle John in chapter 1, verse 14, says, Jesus was “**full of grace**”. Since Jesus was sinless we know Luke is not referring to the favor or grace that is the saving, redeeming grace God gives to sinners, bringing them back into relationship with himself through his sinless Son. This grace is the favor God the Father gave Jesus as demonstrated when, “**the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am**

well pleased.’ ” (Luke 3:22) Jesus was the recipient of grace that was deserved, for he was sinless and Jesus is the giver of grace to undeserving sinners as the divine and sinless Son of God. Unlike we who are sinners, Jesus’ development from human child to Son of God was perfect – perfect physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually because he did not sin. Jesus grew from a babe to child to son of man to Son of God as the Holy Spirit prepared him for his divine mission. The Holy Spirit grows us as well; as we submit in obedience to God by the power of the Spirit and let him rule our lives.

Jesus: “son” & “Son”

Reading verses 41 to 51, “Now his 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 in my Father’s house?’ 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.”

We learn a number of things from this passage. First, that Joseph and Mary were devout in their worship and following the law because they “went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.” Passover was 7 days long and was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread the next day. Gradually, these 8 days and the 2 observances became known as just the Passover. The Passover was one of 3 feasts; Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles were men were to come to Jerusalem to celebrate and observe the command of God. By the time of Jesus’ birth, partly because of the dispersion of the Jewish people this was no longer practical for many. The command for men to come to Jerusalem for 8 days had faded into tradition, not all came and those men who came for the Passover - many stayed for just 1 to 2 days. Women were not required by law to attend Passover. However, they were encouraged to attend as where entire families for this showed greater spiritual devotion. Joseph and Mary were devoted and came as a family – we do not know how many siblings Jesus had at this time.

This year possessed greater importance than all the prior Passovers for Jesus. Jewish boys became sons of Israel or men and were accountable to the law of God at the age of 13. This transition from child to “son of Israel” was celebrated by the ceremony known as Bar Mitzvah, meaning “son of the law”. Passover at the age of 12 was the beginning of the yearlong preparation for the Passover the following year at the age of 13. We need to also recognize when a child went through the Bar Mitzvah ceremony he was no longer a child but a “son” or man. Unlike our present day society there were no “teenage” years of accepted lack of responsibility. This is to hold true for children who are raised in Christian families today, they become accountable and mature as they grow and are responsible for their behavior as adults by the age of 13. We do our children a great disservice if

we do not teach them the scriptures, how to pray, the responsibility and the value of work.

Another, indication of the spiritual devotion of Joseph and his family was as we read in verse 43, **“when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.”** **“When the feast was ended”** means they stayed the entire 8 days. Jerusalem was said to have a population of over a million by the Jewish historian Josephus. The Roman historian Tacitus recorded the population as 600,000. Many modern day archeologists believe the population was closer to 200,000. Knowing that Jerusalem was less than a mile square means that all these estimates indicate Jerusalem was a very densely populated city. At Passover the influx could be another 30 to 50,000 people. All the inns were filled and people were camped in any open space. Roman troops would have been patrolling everywhere. Vendors were selling food for the Passover meal, supplies and thousands of animals for temple sacrifice. The entire city was teeming with people and movement. Since we know Joseph was devout, he would have bought a lamb to atone for his family’s sins. The priests at the temple were sacrificing thousands of animals. Amid all this commotion, Jesus knows that he will be the true sacrifice, the last sacrifice, as John the Baptist would pronounce 18 years later, **“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** (John 1:29) What a sobering realization for a 12 year old.

Traveling to and from Nazareth lasted 3 to 4 days and the people traveled in a caravan of relatives and people from their area for safety from outlaws and for the opportunity to fellowship. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread **“ended (as we read beginning in verse 43) and, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴but 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.” The 1st thing we need to understand is that by Jesus staying behind he was not acting in disobedience to his parents. It marked the transition of Jesus moving away from his responsibility to his earthly parents and his absolute responsibility to his eternal Father.

Our own children who become adults take on the responsibility for their behavior and that includes honoring their parents. God gave the 10 Commandments as the foundation for faithful living. The 5th command reads, “**Honor your father and your mother**, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12) Matthew, Mark and Luke affirm the importance of this command as they recorded the words of Jesus, “**You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’**” (Luke 18:20)

As the caravan returned to Nazareth the travelers fellowshiped and children played – it was not until the end of the day when families gathered that Joseph and Mary realized Jesus was not with them. Continuing in verse 45, “**when they did not find him Jesus, 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.” It took 3 days to find Jesus; 1-day travel out from Jerusalem and 1 back to Jerusalem and when they arrived they spent the day searching. In verse 46 they found Jesus “**in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.**” This was a typical scene in the temple; the teachers sat and the students gathered around prompting conversation by asking the teachers questions. This is the only time Luke refers to those who taught in the temple as teachers – for 18 years from now, when Jesus began his

ministry he was the only true teacher. Today the written Word, the Bible, and Jesus the living Word are the only true teachers of God.

Bringing our focus back to Jesus in the temple he sat among the most prominent teachers in all of Israel; this was an opportunity he would not have had in the small town of Nazareth. Jesus had a burning love for God his Father's Word both from the Scriptures and from the teaching of God the Holy Spirit. It would have been of great interest to Jesus to hear the views of these teachers of the people Israel on the messianic prophecies, the purpose of the sacrificial system and the Law. This is the only time Jesus is portrayed as the student because at 12 years old he was still a child. However, at 13 he would be a son of Israel and a man.

Jesus' knowledge of scripture and his spiritual wisdom was brought out by his dialog with the teachers and he had a great impact, as we read in verses 47 and 48, "all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished." This was not the 1st time nor would it be the last time Jesus amazed people – in chapter 2 the shepherds were **amazed** by what they heard about Jesus from the angel. In chapter 4, his teaching **amazed** the leaders at the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, but because they did not possess spiritual wisdom they rejected Jesus. All through the New Testament we read of Jesus **amazing** people with his knowledge of God and yet because they lacked spiritual wisdom they rejected him. Today, it remains the same – people are often **amazed** by Jesus' life and teaching, but because of the lack of spiritual wisdom they reject God's truth. By God's grace you and I know the truth.

I believe Joseph and Mary were surprised to find Jesus in the temple because they expected him to behave as a child and to be frantically searching for his

parents just as they were frantically searching for him. Mary, as the typical mother, was both relieved and upset when they found Jesus. She speaks in verse 48, saying, “Son, why have you treated us so?” Her question was designed to make Jesus feel guilty. Her next question intensified her rebuke. Mary says, “Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” Jesus had not intentionally defied his parents. He does make it evident that the time had come to begin the break from his earthly family and to begin preparation for his divine ministry serving his true Father who was in heaven.

Jesus had moved from being Joseph and Mary’s child to their “son” indicating his position in their family of no longer being a child and at the same time Jesus revealed his true identity of being from the Son of the living God and Joseph and Mary’s Messiah, Savior and Lord. Jesus would respect his earthly parents, but the time had now come when they would begin to submit to their son as their Messiah. John made clear what Jesus’ mission on earth was in his gospel account, writing the words of the grown man, Jesus. God the Father had sent him, “to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” (4:34) Two chapters later Jesus said, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.” (6:38)

Jesus responds to his mother making clear that he was now beginning to live as the Son of God, his Father, saying, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” Joseph and Mary did not comprehend what Jesus was telling them for 2 reasons; first, they were upset from having been worried about their son. Secondly, this is the first time in the history of mankind and in the history of Israel, as God’s chosen people, for anyone to state they were the only begotten Son of God. At the age of 12 Jesus announces his Messiahship for the 1st time. Now the Jews as individuals and as a nation

considered themselves the sons of God in the sense he is their creator and he was their Father because he had rescued them with miracles from Egypt and set them apart as a nation. But no one had ever had the audacity to claim God as their Father personally. The 12-year-old Jesus is saying his 1st priority is to God his Father. In the truest sense Jesus was not Joseph's or Mary's son, but he was the eternal Son of God and his true home was heaven. Positionally, Jesus was still a child, but when he reached 13 and went through his Bar Mitzvah, he would be a "son" in the sense of being a man and equally accountable under the law as Joseph his adopted father. Jesus fulfilled the law completely. Mary most likely did not remember, at that moment, the words of Gabriel, ["The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."](#) (Luke 1:35)

You see it was Jesus' claim not to be the son of Joseph and Mary or a son of Israel, as these were positional, but it was his claim to be the eternal Son of God as the true essence of whom he is and it was this claim that led to his execution. Jesus made clear, at the age of 12, he was not the son of Israel, small "s", but he was the Son of God with a capital "S".

Now the teachers may have discounted what Jesus said for he was not quite yet a son of Israel or a man, but when Jesus was 30 and made this claim again it incensed the Jewish leadership because they knew exactly what he was saying. Jesus claimed to be sent by his true Father in heaven and that meant he was divine and fully equal to God. The title Son of God means Jesus was the second person of the Trinity and God incarnate. So, just as Jesus sat with the teachers in the temple and just as his earthly parents were amazed - we, you and me, sit at the same juncture – do you believe Jesus was sent by God and is the Christ? If you do, praise God for awakening your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. If not, now is

the time to fall to your knees and plead with the God, the Creator of the universe, by His grace to open your heart and mind to the eternal truth and bring you to submission and salvation through faith in his Son Jesus.

The time to leave the authority of his earthly parents had not yet fully arrived for Jesus was only 12. Luke tells us in verse 51, Jesus “[went down with them \(his parents\) and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.](#)” Jesus had a hard enough time getting people to understand God’s truth, his truth when he began his ministry at the age of 30, he would not have been able to get them to believe the truth when he was only 12. Jesus showed respect to his parents as the law of God taught and was without sin. Jesus fulfilled God’s law of honoring his remaining parent, his mother Mary, until his death on the cross. On the cross “[Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved \(John\) standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son,’](#) ²⁷ [and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, ~~this disciple~~ John took her Mary into his home.](#)” (John 19:26-27) No matter what our age we are to show the same love and honor and respect towards our parents as Jesus showed to both his earthly parents and his true Father in heaven. Does your life show honor to your parents and to God who is your Father in heaven? God commands it to be so and it must be so.

Jesus: “Son” of Wisdom

Luke summarizes all that we have studied this morning in verse 52, “[And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.](#)” This statement reveals all that is known about Jesus’ next 18 years in Nazareth. What we know is that Jesus grew in wisdom as his mind came to a complete understanding of his divine nature of being God incarnate. Physically he also

matured into the stature of a man. As the writer of Hebrews instructed us earlier this morning, “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) By living a sinless life, Jesus was able, as Paul wrote, “God made ~~him~~ *Jesus* who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Here is the bottom line, my beloved, the world does not understand nor can it without spiritual wisdom, but we agree with Paul because of the power of the Holy Spirit and strive to live as he did. He wrote what we are to believe and live - “whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law**, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

(Philippians 3:7-9) We are saved by God’s great mercy and grace – here then is how we are to live each day, as Paul demonstrated - “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21) Let our lives glorify God as we live as Christ taught. Amen and amen!