

January 22nd, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

“The Childhood of God’s Son”

Luke 2:39-52

The Gospels provide narratives foretelling Christ’s birth, the events surrounding His birth, His adult ministry, His death, resurrection, post resurrection appearances, and His ascension back into heaven; but Luke provides the only narrative of the singular childhood event where Jesus’ words are recorded in the Scriptures.

We have studied testimonies, that Jesus is the Son of God, from the angel Gabriel, Mary’s aunt Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna; but today we will look at the testimony of Jesus Himself.

Read Luke 2:39-40... There is an event missing from Luke’s narrative that occurs between the testimonies of Simeon and Anna at the temple, and the return of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus to Nazareth, and so we go to Matthew’s account.

See **Matthew 2:1-12...** The Magi came from the east to find the One who had been born King of the Jews. The Magi visited Mary, Joseph, and Jesus (who was at that time a toddler, not an infant; and Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were staying in a house, no longer at the place where Jesus had been born.

See **Matthew 2:13-18...** Herod goes into a murderous rage in an attempt to kill Jesus, but God protects Him by sending Mary, Joseph, and Jesus to Egypt to escape, as Herod has all the infant males in the vicinity of Bethlehem (ages 2 and under) slaughtered by his soldiers.

See **Matthew 2:19-23...** Only after Herod is dead do Mary, Joseph, and Jesus return to Nazareth.

Back to **Luke 2:40**, “The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.” This verse is all that we know about Jesus’ childhood until He steps out at the Jordan River to be baptized by His cousin John.

Jesus grew up like any other Jewish child in Israel, but Luke’s major emphasis is on the spiritual nature and growth of Jesus in the wisdom and grace of God, until He finally appears at the Jordan River to be baptized by John, when (**Luke 3:22**), “a voice came out of heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.’” **John 1:1-4**, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.” **14**, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” **18**, No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.”

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From the moment of Jesus’ conception in the womb of Mary, He was God the Son, fully human, yet fully God. Jesus’ birth to a virgin, in Bethlehem, was foretold in the Scriptures, saying He would be the eternal God and Savior of all who believe in Him (cf. **Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:21; 2:5**).

Read Luke 2:41-51... The main event in this passage takes place about twelve years after Jesus was presented and dedicated to God at the Temple, as we studied last week. By the time Jesus was twelve, eighteen years before He would step out at the Jordan River and begin His ministry, He already knew who He was and what He had been sent to do as God’s Son, Christ the Lord.

Mary and Joseph, being orthodox Jews, went to Jerusalem “every year at the Feast of Passover.” Passover was one of the three major annual feasts in Israel, the other two being Pentecost and Tabernacles. At this specific Passover, Jesus was twelve, and His family was there for the whole eight day period (one day of Passover, followed by seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread).

Old Testament Law (**Exodus 23:17; 34:22-23; Deuteronomy 16:16**) required all Jewish men to attend the yearly feasts; but because of the dispersion of so many Jews outside of Palestine, many would only attend Passover. Women were not required to attend, although most devoted women did attend, along with their children. Many Jews would travel in large groups, as did Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.

Notice, Luke states that Mary and Joseph went up to Jerusalem every year for Passover; but this year was very special, because Jesus was now twelve, and all Jewish boys became accountable to the law of God at the age of thirteen, through a ceremony known as Bar Mitzvah [“son of the law”].

Usually, the last two Passovers, before a boy turns thirteen, were very important in preparing the boy for manhood, to be treated under the law as a man. Luke doesn’t record anything out of the ordinary during the eight days of Passover, but does give an account of what happened when Mary and Joseph were returning home to Nazareth, thinking that Jesus was with other family members.

We are told (**Luke 2:43**) that “the boy” Jesus [*affirming He was not yet 13*] stayed behind in Jerusalem; although His parents didn’t know He was staying longer, for we are told (**Luke 2:44-45**), “they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.” As I mentioned before, it was common for a large caravan of people to travel together. Mary and Joseph searched for Jesus but couldn’t find Him, so the next morning, they returned to Jerusalem to look for Him.

Some commentators try to infer that either Jesus was being disobedient to His parents, or His parents were being irresponsible to not make sure He was in the caravan leaving for Nazareth: both of those deductions are totally wrong.

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God’s wisdom and grace were inherent in Jesus from His very birth. He never disobeyed His parents, but showed them respect, as the Law decrees, but mostly because He was God in the flesh, without any sin, and most likely, Mary and Joseph thought Jesus was traveling with friends in relatives, but He wasn’t.

Jesus was becoming a man, increasing in God’s wisdom and grace, transitioning from acting like the child of Mary [His birth mother] and Joseph [His legal father], to being the Son of God. Jesus’ responsibility was moving from His earthly parents to His heavenly Father, in order to fulfill His mission.

It would, no doubt, be painful for Mary and Joseph, as Jesus distanced Himself from them, in order to fulfill the plan and purpose of God the Father, that His Son would be the Savior to all those who believe in Him, becoming children of God.

Matthew 12:48-50, Jesus was speaking to the crowds when someone told Him that His mother and brothers had come to see Him, and He responded, *“Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, ‘Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.’*

In **John 6:40** Jesus says, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

Back to **Luke 2:46-47**, *“After three days [one day away from, one day back to, and the 3rd day searching in, Jerusalem] they [Mary and Joseph] found Him [Jesus] in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.”*

During Passover week, many prominent teachers were at the temple. Jesus, transitioning from childhood to manhood [at age thirteen], was at the temple engaging in dialogue with some of the greatest religious scholars in Judaism. At age twelve, He is reasoning with the Rabbis, Pharisees, and Priests of Israel; and they were amazed at His understanding and His answers, perhaps instructing them on messianic prophecies, the sacrificial rituals, and the Law of God.

This is the only place in the Gospel accounts where Jesus is portrayed as a student, everywhere else He is said to be the Teacher [*didaskalos*]; in fact, once He begins His ministry, only Jesus and John the Baptist were referred to as Teacher.

See again **Luke 2:48-50...** Mary and Joseph had searched for hours and finally found Jesus at the temple with the teachers of Israel. No doubt Mary and Joseph were relived, but also upset that Jesus had stayed in Jerusalem without telling them, instead of leaving with the caravan of family and friends for Nazareth.

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Mary said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” Jesus’ response is amazing, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.”

Jesus knew He was God’s Son. This is the first time in Scripture that anyone openly claimed God to be their Father. Jesus made it clear that His ultimate purpose was to do what His heavenly Father wanted Him to do.

Jesus repeatedly refers to Himself as the Son of God, saying that God is His Father, that He and the Father are One [equal], and that those who have seen Him have seen the Father. This infuriated the Jewish religious leaders who hated Jesus and opposed Him to the point of finally having Him executed.

John 10:30-33, “I and the Father are one.’ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, ‘I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?’ The Jews answered Him, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.’”

Matthew 26:63-66, “The high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus *said to him, ‘You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, ‘He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?’ They answered, ‘He deserves death!’”

We know that Jesus would not disobey or do anything to hurt Mary or Joseph. Jesus kept the fifth commandment (**Exodus 20:12**), “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” But it seems that His parents don’t understand that their Son, God’s Son, has a responsibility to His Father in heaven and He must now begin to do His will, as He would repeatedly declare, “I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (cf. **John 3:13; 6:38, 42; 4:34; 5:30**).

See again **Luke 2:51-52...** Mary and Joseph did not understand the magnitude of the statement Jesus made to them, but they would soon realize, as they we’re told early on, that their son did not belong to them, He belonged to God.

Jesus grew in wisdom, as His intellectual understanding grew to know fully the divine truth of God; He grew in stature, physically growing in strength and ability as any child growing to manhood would experience; and in favor with God, knowing His place as God the Son, and with man, as He increasingly matured and interacted with His culture, gaining the respect that was do Him.

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The life lived by Jesus was the One and Only perfect life; a life He would give to pay for the sins of all those who would believe in Him (**Luke 2:40**), “The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him,” (**Luke 2:52**), “And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

William Hendriksen, a well respected New Testament scholar (who died in 1982), writes [in his New Testament Commentary on Luke, pg. 180], “The development of this child was therefore perfect, this along every line: physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual; from the beginning to the end, whether inherited or acquired, He was unimpaired and unimpeded by sin. Between the Child Jesus and His Father... there was perfect harmony, limitless love.”

It is only through Jesus Christ [God the Son] that we can know God the Father, and be known by God the Father, receiving forgiveness for our sins and eternal life. **1Peter 1:18-19**, “For you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ.*”

Jesus Christ died to set you free from sin and eternal judgement, but you must believe in Him to receive forgiveness for your sins. He took all our sins upon Himself, and gave us His righteousness (**2Corinthians 5:21**), “He [God the Father] made Him [God the Son] who knew no sin *to be sin on our behalf*, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him,” (**Acts 4:12**), “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved,” (**Romans 3:23**), “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (**6:23**), “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,” (**1Timothy 2:3-4**), “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

If you have never asked God to forgive your sins, believing in Jesus’ death on the cross as God’s payment for your sins, and Jesus’ resurrection from the tomb, as God’s demonstration of eternal life, why not do that right now, right here?

Romans 10:9-10, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation,” **13**, “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Pastor Mike
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