

A STORY OF A CHILD PRODIGY

Luke 2:41-2:52

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I. Formative Years

II. Fathers and The Father

III. Fulfilling God's Calling

Well, this year we started going through the Gospel of Luke in the Bible and today will complete a month so far in it and we'll finish the second chapter. And the passage we're looking at today really is special passage.

It's the only account of Jesus' life as a kid that we have in the Bible. There's four different accounts of Jesus life and time on earth, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and in all of them this is the only time we hear anything about what Jesus was like as a kid. We've got multiple stories of his birth but then most of them just jump to the time when He started His ministry around 30.

And just so you know, in case you've ever read or watched things like the DaVinci Code and whatnot...there are other books out there about Jesus as a kid. But they didn't come along until nearly 200 years after the books of the Bible we're written and they were written by people who did not claim to be Christians but believers in a religious philosophy called Gnosticism, where you can gain secret knowledge and powers.

These whacky documents have stories of Jesus as a kid not knowing the extent of His own powers and then getting into a fight with another kid and accidentally killing him. The pictures of Jesus they presented were clearly not accurate which is why they were universally deemed and recognized as "pseudepigrapha", which means lying writings.

The story we have today is a super fun story. This month at our church is ministry month, where we are focusing on the various ministry teams we currently have where you can use your gifts and your time and get involved in serving others. Each week we're focusing on just one of the ministries, which will culminate with our ministry fair at the end of the month. Since our story from Luke today is about Jesus as a kid we thought it would be a good week to focus on the R | Kids ministry of our church.

So before we get into the sermon, we got a video for you to check out so you can get a picture of what it's about so you can either pray for the R | Kids ministry or maybe even think about signing up to get involved as a volunteer in it! Check it out: <https://youtu.be/AI-if3q-b20>

It really is a lot of fun. I served back there the first Sunday of the year for the preschool class and it really is a great opportunity not only to love on some kids and talk to them about Jesus but also it's a great opportunity for you to grow as a Christian as you join in with a team of people who are working together in the joys and challenges of ministering to God's children. So think about it. If you're interested, one simple step: go to the connect booth outside after service.

Alright. Back to our story. Let's go ahead and read the text, acknowledge it as God's Word and pray over it.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, 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, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 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." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. 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. – Luke 2:41-2:52

- Pastoral Declaration: This is the Word of the Lord.
- Congregational Response: Thanks Be To God.
- Pastoral Prayer

I've titled my sermon today, "A Story Of A Child Prodigy."

Now, I know everyone who has kids thinks they're the greatest, especially when it's their first kid. You're so amazed at everything they can do you start thinking, "my kid is special, so smart, so skilled, I really think there is something unique about them where they are better and smarter than all the other kids." Everyone thinks or wants their kids to be prodigies. But the truth is they're not. Most likely they're just average. Sorry. :)

However, every once in awhile, once in a million trillion cases there are real prodigies.

Tristan Pang was born in 2001 and by age two was reading and doing high school level math. He scored an A on Cambridge college level exams at the age of 11 and is now working on becoming a professor and the next major scientist in the field of quantum mechanics in the footsteps of Stephen Hawking. He's a child prodigy.

Wayne Gretzky learned to ice skate before he learned to walk when he was 7 months old. He grew up in Canada and they would put up 2x4 in the backyard creating a box and then hose it down and it would freeze overnight, so they could play hockey in the morning. At the age of six he played in minor league hockey with ten year olds and scored 378 goals in one season of minor hockey. Gretzky went on to become the greatest hockey player the world has ever known.

Pablo Picasso didn't talk until long after he was supposed to and his parents were worried about him. When he finally spoke his first words were to ask for a pencil. By the age of four he could paint as well as Michelangelo. His dad was a well known professional painter and art teacher. By the time Picasso was 13 his dad said Picasso's painting had become so good, he put his brushes down never to paint again.

Tristan, Gretzky, Picasso. These guys are child prodigies. Math, sports, art. They were gifted by God with talents far beyond anything they could achieve with hard work. Just naturally gifted.

What we have with the story of Jesus today is a story of child prodigy. Jesus was a gifted prodigy like Tristan, Gretzky and Picasso. But unlike them, He was more than just gifted, He was the gift of

God Himself.

So let's get into the story of Jesus the prodigy. I've got three points for us to walk through: Formative Years, Fathers and The Father and Fulfilling God's Calling.

I. Formative Years

With this first point, what I want to look into is why Luke included this story in his account of Jesus life for us. None of the other Gospel writers include it, so why does Luke?

In the very first few verses of the book Luke tells us that he looked into and investigated all the previous accounts of Jesus, did eyewitness interviews and collected all his data like a good reporter, and he says his goal is that we might have "certainty" about who Jesus is (Luke 1:1-4).

In light of that what we can deduce is that this was a significant event in the life of Jesus that is helpful for us knowing who Jesus really is and what He was all about. And when we look into this story there's a couple things that are clear that really stand out.

One, this would have been a significant event in the life of any kid with his parents. Losing your kid for three days...that'd be a big deal.

At the same time, the second thing that stands out is Jesus unexpected and uncommon reaction to the whole thing. This is actually the very first time we have Jesus recorded speaking about Himself. Lots of stuff was said about Him and who He would be at His birth, which we looked at the last couple weeks. But this is the first time we hear Jesus speaking about the way He sees Himself.

So what we're presented with in this story is on one hand a very common, human story about some parents losing their kid and on the other hand a very uncommon, beyond human story about what type of kid this is.

A few nights ago we we're sitting at our dinner table eating and I finished my food and pulled out my Bible and read this story of Jesus when He was 12 for our family. Which by the way is just a wonderful thing to do. To eat dinner at the table as a family, talk about how each of your days were and then to spend some time talking about God.

Anyway, I read the story and I said, "So girls, can you think of any other stories you know where the parents were going on vacation with a big group of their relatives for a holiday and one of the kids gets left behind and once they get there they realize he's missing and they have to go back and get him?"

Right away my two oldest started jumping up and down, putting their hands in the air saying, "I know Daddy, I know...Home Alone!" You didn't know the script for Home Alone came from the Bible huh?

Then the funniest thing was my youngest started got up and said, "Yeah Daddy, but that boy was bad! I put his arms down like this and when 'grrrrh.' He needed a spanking!"

And I said yeah he did! Then I said, "What did Jesus do here that was bad when his parents left him behind?" They stopped and thought about it for awhile and then my oldest shouted out, "nothing!"

Which was right and then we went on to having a good discussion about what kind of kid Jesus was and the good example He gave us.

So let's do that together right now. Look at verse 46 and 47 with me.

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” – Luke 2:46-47

What do we see here? A 12 year old, listening to a group of guys teaching the Bible, asking them questions and answering theirs.

Now like we talked about a couple weeks ago and what we'll talk about a bit in our next point, Jesus and the Bible's claim is that He was in fact God in the flesh. So if Jesus is in fact God, then He already knows everything. In His deity, He's not asking questions He doesn't know the answer to.

So what's He doing? What Jesus is doing is allowing His human side to be taught as the perfect example for us. Jesus shows us what a perfect human is like in order to succeed where we have all failed and to give us a perfect example that we can follow.

The Bible says this in 1 Peter 2:21, “To this you have been called...Christ left you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”

What Jesus shows us in the very first picture of His life at the age of 12, an age where most kids are typically rebellious know it alls testing limits, instead Jesus shows us humble teachability.

During World War II, George Orwell wrote an essay titled, “The Lion and the Unicorn.” The first line is, “As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me.” He goes on to chronicle the activities of Hitler and the Nazi regime. In his essay, Orwell's assessment is root of human evil is unteachability, when we think we know better and refuse to listen to the wisdom of another perspective and to learn. He ends with a dark conclusion saying, “A generation of the unteachable is hanging upon us like a necklace of corpses.”

The story of the Bible is a story of the human race gone rogue, gone unteachable in a garden, when God gave wisdom about a poisonous tree, but Adam and Eve thought they knew better and ate from it anyway. What Jesus came to do was to succeed where Adam and Eve failed, as God having no need to learn anything and yet as a man being teachable and listening to wisdom.

Here's the thing. No one ever becomes a Christian and no one ever grows or matures as a Christian without being teachable.

If you're here today and you're not yet a Christian, it's wonderful you're here and we're not trying to force you to become a Christian. We're a church that gives you time and space to explore things and figure out where you're at.

Eventually, every one who becomes a Christian, comes to a place where they realize and admit that they've been wrong about some things and are willing to change their mind and their life in light of it. That's the true story of everyone here in this room who has donned calls themselves a Christian.

But it doesn't stop there. Really the life of a Christian is one where we enter into a journey of teachability. Once we become a Christian it's not like we arrive and then know everything and are right about everything. Sadly, too often it sounds like that they way some Christians talk.

The only way we grow or mature as Christians is through a process of learning, where we continually realize things about ourselves and the world where our perception has been off, and so we change our minds and endeavor to live our lives differently.

So how do we do that? How do we be teachable? Jesus shows us here. We ask questions. We listen to answers. We open ourselves up to people asking us questions and we answer them honestly and as truthfully as possible.

This is how we are formed. We know for a fact that our earliest childhood experiences have a massive effect on the persons we become in life. How we see ourselves, how we see the world, how we react to situations and how we relate to other people all has roots in our family of origin. In that story, in each of our individual stories there are key events which imprint themselves onto our consciousness, which form us into who we are.

This event in the life of Jesus was undoubtedly one of those events. It's was a life forming event. At the age of 12 we see Him undergoing what would normally be a very traumatic event but instead it becomes a revealing event. An event which reveals Jesus heart, character, purpose and mission in the world.

When Jesus' human parents are upset, He gives them a profound answer and then humbly entrusts Himself to their care by what verse 51 calls being "submissive to them."

In Jesus what we find is a supreme display of teachability. For us, depending on each of our stories we may have had good formative years or bad ones. For most of us it's probably a mix.

But for all of us the answer to embracing our true humanity and life we long for and that God means for us...is through Jesus example of teachability. The only way we are formed into the person God wants us to be and become is through teachability.

So are you teachable? Or are you arrogant and think you know everything already? Are you open to being wrong about some things?

Are you curious? Are you asking questions? Questions about yourself? Questions about God? Questions about the world we live in? Questions are good.

Are you open? Do you let and invite others to ask you questions? Or are you defensive, rigid and closed off?

For parents, are you probing at your kids, asking them questions, listening to them, inviting them to ask you questions? That's how parents have taught their children throughout Christian history.

It's called catechism and we've published a book to help with that called R | Kids Catechism. It's an updated form of the Westminster Catechism. I do it with my kids usually about twice a week. It's fun. First page, question 1. Who made you? Answer: God. Question 2. What else did God make? Answer: All things. Question 3. Why did God make you and all things? Answer: For His own glory.

We have a lot of fun with it and often end up in great discussions in all kind of follow up questions and answers. So try that out. Even if you don't have kids, you can do it with your spouse or the person you're dating, or just on your own.

Alright, this was kind of a long point. Let's move on to our second point, "Fathers and The Father."

II. Fathers and The Father

In this point, what I want to look into is this interpersonal dynamic that is on display concerning Jesus' relationship with God the Father and his relationship with Mary and Joseph, His human parents.

Jesus earthly parents are mentioned together three different times here Luke chapter 2. A couple in regards to their journey and then realizing Jesus was mission and then a third culminating time in verse 48 when they find Jesus in the temple having these discussions with the Bible teachers.

Verse 48 says this,

"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.'

So Mary speaks up, which is interesting. Normally Dad would be the one to address him but already we're hearing this subtle indication of Joseph's role as step-father. But Mary, Jesus mom speaks up, calling Jesus "Son" and essentially accuses Jesus of being a bad Son, abandoning the family caravan and causing His parents great distress.

In reply, Jesus gives this response, verse 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?"

This is a powerful statement. By saying this Jesus says something very significant. By saying this He announces that Joseph is not His Father, God is. The temple was called God's house and the teachers of the temple taught God's book, the Bible.

So Jesus, already at the age of 12 has embraced being the Son of God. Two weeks ago here we looked at what the angel told Mary before she got supernaturally pregnant with Jesus. Luke 1:35 the angels said God's, "Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."

So Jesus, at the age of 12, knew He was deity in the flesh and declares that to be so. And Mary receives it. After Jesus was born and the angels appeared to the shepherds Luke 2:19 says,

"Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.' Which is the same thing she says once again here verse 51 after this all takes place in the story we're looking today."

It's an emotive scene. Jesus embracing and declaring His unique identity as the Son of God... powerful. And then Mary's awe. She's really the first Christian, believing in Him from the beginning and all the way to the end at the foot of the cross. She's in awe of Jesus, in who He is and that God would reveal Himself to the world through her son. It's an incredible moment.

Jesus reveals with these words, that God is in fact His Father.

In that what we see and hear is a tension, a tension between Jesus biological and relational human family and His true, physical and spiritual family as the son of God. For Jesus this tension was literal, since He was literally God. But in the same way, all who end up following Jesus find themselves in this tension, the tension of biological and spiritual families.

Whether we grew up with our biological parents, or adoptive parents or relatives we grow up with a sense of father. Our fathers were either present or not present and if they were there we tend to have a good view of our father or a negative one. Along with that is our relationship with our moms, siblings and extended relatives. We don't pick them, can't change them, they are simply a part of who we are in our story.

But what happens when become Christians is a profound work deep in our soul where we get adopted into God's family through Jesus and by that work, God becomes our Father too. Jesus the Son shows us the Father, gives us His Father and shares all of His inheritance with us.

This is what the Bible says in Romans 8:10,15-17,

“If Christ is in you then... you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons [and daughters], by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,] and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”

One of the biggest blessings of becoming and being a Christian is you get brought into a spiritual family of other believers where you all share together this deep spiritual reality. We're experiencing that right now together and we experience it in homes together during the week, eating meals and talking about God's work in our lives. And we experience in the personal times we share together, both in time of fun, hardship, prayer and just processing what we're learning.

What often happens then is we start feeling closer to our spiritual family than we do our biological family and that puts us in tension. Now the ideal is when both you're spiritual family and your biological family is on the same page. But that's actually rare. There's a few families where that is the case but more often than not, it's the other way around. And when that's the case, it's okay.

Jesus felt the tension here too. But what Jesus the kid points us to is the wonderful truth that through Him we get connected to God the Father and it's really really good to be His sons and daughters. Jesus just enjoyed being in the Father's house.

So if you had a father figure and that father pointed you to the goodness of God the Father, then God has blessed you so that you might follow in His footsteps. And likewise if you didn't have a father who was present or your father wasn't the best, then you are also blessed because you know the kind of Father you wish you always had and Jesus came to give Him to you.

My encouragement is for us to live into that reality. To experience the goodness of God the Father's house and His family. Jesus mediates to us the presence and goodness of God the Father.

Eighteen years later when Jesus would start His public teaching, preaching and healing ministry He came on the scene saying the Father sent Him. On one occasion toward the end when He was just with His original twelve disciples He pulled them aside and said this:

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” – John 14:9-11

I don't know what things were or are like with you and your Dad? But what I do know is that God is good Father and that through believing in Jesus and following Him with His people, we experience that goodness.

Is God your Father, or just a far off idea? When you think of Jesus do you think of Him as just a man who did some good things? Or do you see Him as the Son of God, sent to open up the goodness of the Father to you?

I'll end this point with a quote from Doug Wilson's book "Father Hunger." In it he writes about what fathers are supposed be like and the growing epidemic of absentee fathers. He concludes the book with this summary,

“All Christians through history may share in the unity between the Father and the Son. The Father's glory given to the Son has in turn been given to believers. Christ is in them, and the Father is in Christ, the they might become one, with the world coming to know that God sent the Son, and that the Father loves these believers. The Son desires to bring believers into the glory. The point is to make the Father's love known to the world.”

God the Father is a good Father, who not only watches over all of our life but loves us and cares for us and is with us by His Son, whose Spirit has been sent into our hearts.

On Thursday this week I went surfing. It was all blown out and choppy. No one was out but I paddled out anyway. I just like being in the water in the storm. So I paddled out beyond where it was breaking and I just sat there for an hour praying. Reflecting. And just enjoying the presence of God my Father who says, "I love you, I am with you, I am for you." He's a good Father guys. That's what Jesus wants us to know.

Well, for our last point today, "Fulfilling God's Calling", let's talk about Jesus' sense of purpose.

III. Fulfilling God's Calling

This point comes as well from the same verse as our last point, where in Luke 2:49 Jesus says, "I must be in my Father's house."

Now, normally I don't really like to talk Greek much. Luke was originally written in Greek, so what we have are English translations. I don't like talking about Greek because I'm not trying to show off and I never want anyone to think they can't really read, know or understand the Bible unless they know Greek, because that's not true.

However, being able to read the original Greek at times really really helps and this is one of those cases. I really like the translation we use here, the ESV. But I actually think they blow it here because the Greek word for house is "*oikos*" and it's used in numerous places in the Bible, but "*oikos*" does not appear in verse 49. It's actually simply the word "things." So if you translate it literally, like that, it would be, "Did you not know that I must be in the things of my Father?"

Why that's important is because Jesus wasn't so much saying He belonged in the temple. What he was saying was that He had a mission God had called and sent Him to fulfill. There were things He came to be and to do and He must do them.

Later on when He's about thirty years old Jesus says this,

“The works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.” – John 5:36

All throughout Jesus recorded life He's on a mission to fulfill God's calling on His life.

Jesus calling and mission was two-fold and it's captured in the last verse of our story today, verse 52 when Luke says, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

First, Jesus came to be the perfect man. To succeed where all other men and women have failed. Second, Jesus came to give Himself to the world.

What's interesting is that phrase “increased in wisdom and stature” was a common phrase used in ancient pagan stories about various heroes and gods. What Luke does here is what so many of the Bible writers do all over the place and they take something that may not specifically have had godly origin, but then they apply it to Jesus.

Essentially Luke is saying, Jesus is the best hero of all. He's got a hero's story from the time of His birth. He had a hero childhood. And just wait until you hear about the life He lived and how it ended!

When Jesus went into the temple, verse 47 says these old learned wise men, were “amazed” by Him. Throughout the story of Jesus in Luke we'll hear that phrase again and again. Everyone everywhere is amazed by Him as He engages all kinds of people. He just continues to grow in favor with people as the savior for all.

The reason Luke wrote what He did is for us, hoping that through the story of Jesus He might win our favor as well. That we might read the story, look in on it and walk away “amazed” at who Jesus is!

I don't know about you today, but to me, this is an amazing story. Are you amazed?

During the time Luke was written, there were lots of stories of gods come to earth, child prodigies who accomplished great feats.

As a baby, Hercules strangles a snake sent to kill him in his cradle and then grows up with divine strength slaying lions, bulls and demons. But Hercules strength is limited, only has some divinity, is extremely proud and he's besought with sexual temptation and exploits. The Greek gods were always only a little better than man.

With Jesus what we encounter is a story like none other. The story of a boy, who was fully God at His birth. One who held back the divine display of His might and wisdom and in humility allowed Himself to be taught. One who resisted temptation and succeeded, not so He could one up mankind and use them, but so He could save them.

The story of Jesus the supreme of the God-man and it's no less than amazing. There's none like it. Jesus is it! He's the one. Jesus fulfills His calling and does so in order to come to us, amaze us and

save us.

For us, our calling is simply an extension of His. God has given each and every one of us different gifts and talents and He means for us to use them to engage as many people as possible so they might hear how good Jesus is.

Each of us are different in our own unique ways. We have unique opportunities to offer our time and treasures to join Jesus in His mission.

Colossians 4:17 says, “See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.”

Are you fulfilling it? What has God given you? How are you giving your time, talents and treasure to spread the amazingness of Jesus?

Let’s be a church committed to fulfilling our calling to engage all people so that they might be amazed at Jesus along with us.

Conclusion

Well, hopefully you’ve had fun today talking about Formative Years, Fathers and The Father and Fulfilling God’s Calling. I love this story.

Each week we conclude every sermon by taking some bread and dipping it in the wine or some juice. It’s a way of acknowledge in the bread Jesus perfect life and then in the wine His perfect blood shed on the cross.

Interestingly in our text today, Jesus says I must be in my Father’s house and toward the end of His life He says He must die on the cross and must rise.

In Jesus’ coming, He came to succeed where we’ve failed, to engage all people, to amaze us and to show us the Father. In Jesus’ death He dies for all our failures, to put them to death so we can be freed from all the fear, guilt and shame they heap on us.

None of us can save ourselves. We’re not prodigies and even if we were it wouldn’t be enough to save our souls. For that we need the savior of souls. Jesus. So let’s go to Him in prayer and offer our lives in service of His mission.

Let’s pray.