

## Luke 2:41-52 – The Message

<sup>Luke 2:41-45</sup> Every year Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up as they always did for the Feast. When it was over and they left for home, the child Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents didn't know it. Thinking he was somewhere in the company of pilgrims, they journeyed for a whole day and then began looking for him among relatives and neighbors. When they didn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him.

<sup>46-48</sup> The next day they found him in the Temple seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The teachers were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt.

His mother said, "Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you."

<sup>49-50</sup> He said, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?" But they had no idea what he was talking about.

<sup>51-52</sup> So he went back to Nazareth with them, and lived obediently with them. His mother held these things dearly, deep within herself. And Jesus matured, growing up in both body and spirit, blessed by both God and people.

## Turning Twelve

Luke 2:41-45

So, here is a question that may seem a bit odd, but, bear with me. When did you turn twelve? I'm not talking about what year it was. I'm not talking about how old you were. I'm talking about when you first began to realize that you were being led and molded and trained to enter the family business.

I'm talking about your spiritual age of awakening.

Mary and Joseph have been bringing Jesus to Jerusalem his entire life. Good Jewish parents, Luke tells us they came as a family to Jerusalem every year for the Feast of Passover. They raised him in the faith; taught him the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Moses and Miriam. They taught him about parting seas and pillars of fire; the Ten Commandments and a land flowing with milk and honey. We make a mistake to think the boy Jesus was somehow already familiar with these things. He was a boy and he needed to learn, so they taught him by word and example.

But something happens when he turns twelve. This year is different from the others. Something seems to have awakened in Jesus this year; an awareness, a sense of call. Now, he's definitely still twelve. To our 21<sup>st</sup> century ears, there's no excuse for not telling his parents he is staying in Jerusalem while they head home, and, his response to his mother *sounds* like a 12-year-old's response: almost blaming them for not knowing where he'd be.

But there's also something more. He is in the temple, engaged in conversation with priests, something the priests don't see every day – a 12-year-old asking questions, wanting to know more than he is learning in the synagogue back home. Luke says Jesus answers the priests' questions, too. It is a common teaching method to ask a student a question that makes him think; look at something differently than you've looked at it before. And they are amazed at his ability to give much more than twelve-year-old answers.

When Joseph and Mary finally find him, I can picture Mary hugging his neck in relief, and then scolding, "Young man, why have you done this to us?" My mom used to say it like that, too. "Young man..." or, if I was really in trouble, "Kenneth Lee..." But, then comes the really interesting response that reveals a great deal. *Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?* That is a hugely important statement within a question, and a lot of the translations fail to convey the meaning. Most translations have Jesus answering, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house," the emphasis being on his location, but Luke never uses the word "house." The literal wording is, "Didn't you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?" The King James Version actually has the *meaning* right – "I must be about my Father's business?"

Jesus is revealing a growing understanding of his call. In that day and in that culture, the son of a carpenter would have grown up being taught his father's craft, his father's business. He would have helped in his father's workshop, learning how to find the right piece of wood for the right job; how to measure and cut, plane and join, fit and finish, without the benefit of nails or screws or glue. He would have been learning his father's business so that, when he came of age, he would be found in his father's house, meaning that he would take over his father's business.

But something happens here in Jerusalem with this 12-year-old Jesus. He is coming to the awareness that his Father's house is not a carpenter's shop, but the temple of Yahweh, and his Father's business is not the art of woodworking, but the art of proclaiming the presence of the kingdom of God. It isn't fully formed, not completely revealed. He's got a lot to learn. Luke ends the story by saying that Jesus continued to mature physically and spiritually. But, it is at the age of twelve when things begin to dawn on him, a sense of call begins to form, an awareness begins to grow that he has a special place in the plans of God, in his Father's business.

So, again, when did you turn twelve? When did you begin to sense that God had a special plan for your life, a special call on your life? I'm not necessarily talking about when you were "saved." What I really am thinking of is that moment when you realized that you weren't just called to be a Christian so you could go to heaven when you die, but that you were called to follow Jesus so you, too, could be about his, and your, Father's business?

I was thirteen when I turned twelve. The summer of 1967, between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, a pimple-faced, gawky, uncoordinated kid going through all the insecurities of adolescence. I sat in a hard, unpadded pew in my grandparents' little country Baptist church. It was family reunion time and we all went to church before enjoying the huge feast on the family farm's front yard. Uncle Joe was preaching. He was a

young man in his 20's, one of two of my dad's brothers who became preachers. Joe was one of my favorite uncles. He used to sing gospel songs to the cows while they were being milked. If there are cows in heaven, some of them were probably converted by my Uncle Joe.

He was preaching about his call to the ministry that morning. I don't remember much about the sermon except that he knew God was calling, but for years he ran from it. God has a way of tracking us down, though, not giving up on us, pursuing us until we say yes. Joe said, "So, finally I said yes to God's call to be a preacher..." I don't remember what came next because there was another voice speaking in my head. It wasn't a real voice, like Jesus speaking to Paul on the road to Damascus, nonetheless, the message was so clear it might as well have been a real voice. When Uncle Joe said, "So, finally I said yes to God's call to be a preacher," something inside of me said, "That's what you're going to do, too, Ken."

Nothing could have seemed more frightening and just plain wrong. At thirteen, all I wanted to do was blend in with the scenery. It was the beginning, just the seed of a thought, an awareness that took years before I could even understand what it meant.

I was thirteen when I turned twelve. How old were you when you began to sense that God had a job for you in the family business? Maybe cooking suppers for a homeless shelter, or sitting with folks who need an ear to listen and a shoulder to lean on. Maybe teaching children that Jesus loves them, and modeling Jesus' love by the way you love them. Maybe leadership – the realization that, for some reason, people look to you, respect you, follow you, and God can use you to lead his people. Maybe it is generosity – you find within yourself this incredible joy in giving, and the more you give, the greater your joy. Maybe it is music – your great fulfillment in making music touches others, and, sometimes, people hear the music of heaven through you. Maybe it is service – the ministry of helping. No need to be out front, you love to be behind the scenes, ushering, or doing dishes, or making sure the church furnace works on cold Sunday mornings. Maybe it is the gift of presence, spending time with folks for whom no one else has much time, or maybe you are called to be a youth leader.

It may be that the place you are called to be about your Father's business is not specifically in a church setting. You may be about God's business somewhere else. Frederick Buechner once wrote that the way to discover where God is calling you to serve is at that intersection where your great gladness meets the world's great need. He says, "The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done."<sup>1</sup> The whole world is our Father's house, and the family business is truly global.

A Presbyterian pastor named Jim Chatham once wrote, "*If the Bible says anything clearly, it says this: God calls us: calls us to do whatever God has in mind; calls us to set a great many other things aside and follow God's bidding.*"<sup>2</sup>

When did you turn twelve? When did you gain that dawning awareness that God is calling you to enter the family business?

Who knows, maybe today you turn twelve. If so, happy birthday.

© 2016, Ken Broman-Fulks

---

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1993, pp. 118-19.

<sup>2</sup> James O. Chatham from *Is It I, Lord? Discerning God's Call to be a Pastor*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. Quoted on the Presbyterian Church (USA) website <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min>.