



*To Know Christ . . .
and to Make Him Known*

Wilmington, North Carolina
Dr. Mark E. Gaskins, *Senior Pastor*
The Lord's Day, January 13, 2019

www.templebaptist.us
(910) 763-3351
© 2018

About Our Father's Business Luke 2:41-52

Talk about a tough job . . .

Parenting is a monumental task whatever the situation and whoever the child. It's one of the most challenging assignments anyone can ever face.

But can you imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph raising *Jesus*?

Of course, they didn't have to worry about most of the things that parents often have to deal with—misbehavior, disobedience, disrespect, and such.

But how do you bring up the Son of God? He had to grow and learn to do things like every other child. After all, He was fully human. But He was also fully divine.

The fourth century preacher and biblical scholar Jerome put it this way in one of his sermons: "His human nature was instructed by His own divinity."¹ So while His mind developed over time just as His body did—as Luke puts it in our text, **Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature** (2:52, NASB),²—still from a very early age, Jesus was developing a keen sense of His identity and mission as the Son of God. Luke puts it this way in 2:40, just before our text: **And the Child grew and become strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.** And that describes Him *before* He was twelve years old, as He was in our text for today.

Going to the temple . . .

In the Old Testament, the law prescribed that every Jewish man was to go to the temple to worship at three of the great feasts each year—Passover and Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. In Jesus' day, for practical purposes (distance and such) most devout Jewish men who lived some distance away from Jerusalem usually tried to attend *one* of these feasts each year.

That's what Joseph did. Every year he and Mary would go to Jerusalem for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. That was their custom.

Luke doesn't tell us whether this was the first time Jesus went with them, but he does emphasize that Jesus went with them in this year when He was twelve years old. That was a significant year of Jesus' life, or of any Jewish boy's life for that matter. He would soon see a great milestone and experience a great rite of passage. At twelve, He was still a "son of the covenant." At thirteen, He would become "a son of the commandment"—a *bar mitzvah*—according to Jewish practice, so that in terms of His accountability for His obedience to the law, He would then become a man.³

Now whether He usually went with them for Passover or not, this wasn't Jesus' first trip to

the temple. Luke tells us earlier in chapter 2 that when Jesus was a baby, Mary and Joseph brought Him to the temple to do everything the law required, dedicating Him as her firstborn son to the Lord and offering the sacrifice for her purification following His birth. At that visit, they marveled when an old man named Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God that he had seen God's salvation. It must have only added to their amazement when the elderly prophetess Anna also gave thanks to God for their baby and began to tell others about Him.

Now Jesus was twelve. But this was the year before that rite of passage. And He had come to Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph for the Passover.

Missing . . . but not really . . .

They were there for a week, and when the Feast of Unleavened Bread was over, they started the journey back home to Nazareth. They were traveling together with relatives and friends in a caravan. It was a lot like it was in an earlier time in our culture—you didn't worry much if your child or children weren't around, because you knew that other family and friends would watch out for them and even discipline them if they needed it.

So they started back home that morning and traveled a day's journey on the three-day journey back to Nazareth. But that evening when they stopped for the night and all the family units began to reassemble, *Jesus wasn't there*.

They began to search for Him among their relatives and friends, but He was nowhere to be found. So they went back to Jerusalem—another day's journey, probably through the night.

They searched Jerusalem that day and into the next, looking everywhere. Finally, on the third day, they decided to go back to the temple to look for Him.

And there He was, **sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions** (2:46). Everybody who heard the conversation was amazed by His understanding and by the answers He gave.

Mary and Joseph were astonished at the whole situation. In all the normalcy of watching Jesus grow up, to see Him in this situation no doubt brought back afresh all those ponderings and perplexities they'd experienced in the events surrounding His birth.

Despite all that, like any good mother, Mary started to correct Him. **"Son, why have you done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously"** (2:48). But Jesus gently and respectfully corrected her: **"Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"** (2:49). Many translations say something like, **"in My Father's house."** As important as Mary and Joseph's claims were on Him as His earthly parents, He was answering to a higher authority, and reminding His mother of what she already knew about who He really was—as the angel Gabriel had told her, He was **"the Son of the Highest . . . the Son of God"** (Luke 1:32, 35).

Mary and Joseph didn't understand it all, but they all went back home to Nazareth. Jesus submitted to them as His parents and was obedient to them, increasing **in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men** (2:52).

Being like Jesus . . .

This is the only story we have in the New Testament about Jesus as a child. Now there were plenty of stories in other early Christian writings, some of them very fanciful. But this is the only authoritative biblical story we have from Jesus' childhood, and it's an important one.

There's a lot in this story about Jesus that we should strive for in order to be like Him—being obedient children, submitting to appropriate authority, answering to God as our ultimate

authority, spiritual growth

But I want to focus in on one particular statement for a minute, where Jesus said, **“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”**

Most recent Bible translations (NASB, ESV, NRSV, NIV) render the last phrase of this statement as **“in my Father’s house.”** A close translation of the Greek would be **“in the things of My Father.”** In this context, **“my Father’s house”** is quite possibly the correct sense. But the older translation in the KJV and the NKJV is a legitimate translation, and perhaps closer to what Jesus was expressing. *Jesus had to be about His Father’s business.*

And brothers and sisters, that’s an extremely important way that we should be like Jesus. He is God’s only begotten Son, so God the Father is truly His Father. But God is our Father as well! As the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Christ is God’s Son through what theologians call eternal generation. In His incarnation as a human being, Jesus is God’s Son because He was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit. God is *our Father* because He has adopted us into His family! He chose to do this in His great love and mercy and by His grace. He has accomplished it through what He has done in His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

So if Jesus is our model and we’re to become like Him, *we must be about our Father’s business.*

But what does that mean?

Well, think about what Jesus was doing here in our text. He was listening to the teachers and asking them questions. As He did, He displayed a truly astonishing understanding for a twelve-year-old. He was *growing and developing spiritually.*

Certainly *spiritual growth and development* is our Father’s business. Being in a right relationship with Him is an ongoing reality. It’s something that God nurtures in us as we seek to know Him more and more about Him.

Now knowing Him more and knowing more about Him are not necessarily the same thing. But both are very important. *Knowing Him* is about our relationship with Him—trusting Him, spending time with Him, enjoying and communing with Him, depending on Him, and submitting to Him. *Knowing about Him* is understanding His character and His ways more deeply, and striving to become like Him in our character and to conform our lives to His ways. We should be about this kind of spiritual development in our own lives and helping others experience it in their lives.

But that’s not all that it means to be about the Father’s business.

In Acts 1:7-9, when the apostles ask Jesus just before He ascends back to the Father if the time has now come for Him to restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus tells them that this is a part of the Father’s business that’s none of their business. The part of the Father’s business they were to be concerned with was that He was going to send the Holy Spirit on them, and that when the Spirit came, they would receive power to be Christ’s witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth!

Surely *to bear witness about Christ* in our own community and throughout the world is to be about the Father’s business!

And think about what the other passages read in our service today tell us. Isaiah 43:1-7 is about redemption and salvation and restoration. The LORD says to His people Israel that He has redeemed them and that whatever they face, He’ll be with them as their Savior to deliver them and to restore them. That’s God’s business.

If we’re to be about our Father’s business, then shouldn’t we as a church and as individual

disciples be focusing on *redemptive ministry*, reaching out to people who are hurting and in need of God's touch, who need deliverance and restoration? Shouldn't we be sharing the gospel in word and deed to point them to the one who can heal their hurts and deliver and restore them?

In Romans 12, Paul called on believers on the basis of the incredible mercies that God has lavished on us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God, not letting this present evil age we live in squeeze us into its mold, but rather being transformed by the renewing of our minds. When we live that way in Christ, we'll seek to understand and fulfill our role in the body of Christ according to the spiritual gifts God has given us. And as we do that, we'll be seeking to relate in appropriate ways to our brothers and sisters in Christ within the church and to those in the world around us outside the church.

When we live in the way Paul is talking about here, *relating in appropriate ways to God, to one another, and to unbelievers*, certainly we will be about our Father's business, doing the things He would have us to do!

But *how*? *How* are we to do all these things? Sometimes it's hard enough just to get through the day!

When we focus on our relationship with God through Jesus Christ, truly seeking to grow and develop in that relationship, we'll see God at work around us.

And when we see God at work around us, we'll get involved in what He's doing! That's what Henry Blackaby, in his *Experiencing God* study, calls *joining God* in His work in the world.⁴

Jesus called it *being about His Father's business*.

The question is, will *we* be about *our* Father's business?

†MEG

¹ *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament III, Luke (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 56.

² Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version.

³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, One Volume Edition, ed. Leslie F. Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961/1979), 1420.

⁴ Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).