

IT TAKES MORE THAN A VILLAGE

May 13, 2007 Sunday a.m.

Luke 2:41-52

INTRODUCTION

- A. **It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us** is a book by then- First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, and her ghostwriter Barbara Feinman, in which she presents her vision for the children of America. She focuses on the impact individuals and groups outside the family have, for better or worse, on a child's well-being, and advocates for a society which meets all a child's needs. In 1996, the book became a "New York Times' best seller. The book's title is attributed to an African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child."
 - B. Does it take a village to raise a child or are there other influences that contribute to the upbringing and well being of children?
 - C. On this Mother's Day, lets consider the influences at work in the upbringing of Jesus. We can see them in Luke 2:41-52.
- I. ONE THING WE SEE IT TAKES IS a partnership between the church and home (v. 41).**
- A. Even the limited information we have about Jesus' family suggests a partnership existed between His Jewish home and His Jewish faith. For example:
 1. Jesus' parents took him to the Temple to be circumcised when He was eight days old (2:21).
 2. They had Him dedicated forty days after He was born in accordance with Jewish purification rites (2:22; Leviticus 12).
 3. We hear no more until He was twelve, but Luke summarizes those early years in v. 40-41.
 - B. Most Christian parents realize they cannot do everything for their children (i.e. that they need help). Partnerships with extended family, friends, schools and churches are beneficial in rearing children (v. 44).
 - C. What can the church do to aid you in your parenting tasks?
 1. For one thing, the church helps celebrate the rites of passage (birth, baptism, graduation, marriage).
 2. The church also provides comfort, encouragement and support in times of stress and failure (loss of family member, sickness, job termination).
 3. Furthermore, the church provides spiritual and practical instruction.
 4. So it takes more than a village. It takes a partnership with your church.
- II. ANOTHER THING WE SEE IT TAKES IS CHRISTIAN PARENTS.**
- A. In 2005, Senator Rick Santorum, from Pennsylvania, wrote a rebuke to Hillary's book which he titled, "It Takes A Family". Without getting into politics, it does take a family, a Christian family.
 - B. One writer commented that becoming a Christian should be more like a "marinade" than a "glaze". This is to say, we are transformed by being soaked in the Gospel rather than having it brushed on at a single point in time. In fact, salvation is really both.
 1. Children are soaked in the gospel until they come to a point when they choose it for themselves.
 2. Some of both may have been in evidence when Jesus' parents took him to Jerusalem at age 12 (v. 42).
 - C. How can parents "marinate" their children or soak their children in the gospel until they choose it for themselves?
 1. First, take responsibility for your child's Christian education. Jesus' parents took Him to church (i.e. Temple and synagogue) without any suggestion that He was allowed to decide whether to go or stay home.
 - a. The parent who says "*I let my children decide for themselves whether to go to church*" has just made the decision for them. Will you also let them decide whether to go to school for an education or to the doctor for an illness?

- b. You are God's representative to your children.
- 2. Second, model the role for your children. Mary and Joseph didn't just send Jesus to the Temple, they went with Him. If God isn't important to you, odds are He won't be to your children, either.

Someone put it like this, "If you don't make a habit out of going to church , you shoot yourself in the foot, your children in the leg, and your grandchildren in the heart."
- 3. Third, be consistent. Jesus' parents took Him to the Temple every year (v. 41).
- 4. Fourth, be patient. It took twelve years before Jesus came to the point where He chose God for Himself. There needs to be a tension between our desire to see our children saved and their readiness to be saved. We shouldn't push our children into the baptistry, but neither should we prevent them when the time has come. One clear sign that the time may be near is the questions they begin to ask about Jesus, baptism and the church.

III. IT ALSO TAKES THE PERSONAL CHOICE OF THE CHILD THEMSELVES.

- A. One major flaw in most parent/child relationships is either too much control or too little control.
 - 1. Too much control smothers and stifles a child.
 - 2. Too little control lacks direction and limitations.
 - 3. Both often result in some kind of rebellion.
- B. Steel Magnolias is a movie about a unique friendship between five women. An underlying theme though focuses on the mother/child relationship. A diabetic daughter chooses to have a child against her doctor's advice and eventually slips into a coma and dies. The mother is left behind to try and figure out why she couldn't control her daughter's decision and destiny.
- C. Children must be allowed to make their own decisions and choices in life, especially those relating to faith.
 - 1. Fortunately many, like Jesus, choose to express their faith (v. 49).
 - 2. Unfortunately, some choose to reject faith.
 - 3. What can or should you do when your children reject faith? Follow the example of the prodigal father.
 - a. Don't punish them (i.e. show disapproval or withhold yourself). The prodigal's father still acted like his son's father.
 - b. Don't force them. The prodigal's father let his son make his own decision, even though it was a mistake.
 - c. Don't give up on them. The prodigal's father kept looking for his son to come back. Although we aren't told so, I'm sure he also continued to pray for his son, too.

CONCLUSION

- A. It takes more than a village to raise our kids.
- B. What?
 - 1. It takes a partnership between the church and the home.
 - 2. It takes involved Christian parents.
 - 3. It takes individual choice.