

Jesus in His Father's House

Luke 2:41-52

Prayer: Father, we thank you for your presence with us, through your Holy Spirit. Father, your Son, truly your Son, has come to be our new Temple, through whom we worship you. He was teachable, humble, obedient on this earth, but he knew exactly who he was. He was your Son, who came with knowledge and understanding of your Law because he knew you and he knew who he was. Father, it is that same Son that sat with the teachers of the law and that sits at your right hand now and in whose name we pray that you would teach *us* your ways and who we are in relation to you.

Intro: One of my favorite movies as a kid was *Home Alone*. (Home Alone 2 better?) A large, extended family decides to travel to Paris for Christmas vacation and in the chaos and confusion of loading everyone up, the family forgets young Kevin McAllister who gets left at home alone where he must survive by himself, ordering his own pizza, fighting off bandits, waiting for his family to return home with the help of John Candy and his roving polka band.

And here we have this curious story of the boy Jesus being left behind in the temple at is a *Home Alone* sort of situation. This is the only story the Bible relates to us about Jesus between his infancy and his adulthood. We kind of have in our minds that Jesus was some sort of strange precocious child, but he probably came across as a pretty normal kid. Yet, Luke seeks to highlight this story that he almost certainly learned from Mary, Jesus' mother or a close friend to whom she had shared the story. And even this story isn't that strange. It's simple; who hasn't lost track of a kid? Who

hasn't been separated from their parents as a child? And yet this story profoundly shows us both

1. A godly family
2. The Family of God

Those two things aren't exactly the same thing. I want to be clear on that. But in Mary, Joseph, and Jesus we see a "godly family". This family traveled roughly 80 miles, probably on foot to Jerusalem from Nazareth, the small town where they lived. They didn't come for the sightseeing, however. They came to observe the Passover feast. This feast was held every year in Jewish Law as a way of remembering that God had delivered the his people from slavery and captivity from Egypt. Specifically, the Passover feast remembered that God had delivered the people of Israel while punishing Egypt for their brutality. On the night that God had declared war on Egypt, so to speak, the Israelites were to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb as a sign of their loyalty to God and God's grace to them. They ate a hastily prepared meal of lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, and they dressed so that they could pack up and go at a moment's notice.

Every year, devout Jewish men would travel back to Jerusalem to observe this feast commemorating God's salvation of his people. It was not required for women or children to attend, but some did, and Mary, perhaps because of her devoutness, travels with her husband. In fact, it seems to be their yearly custom to make this trip together. This is a godly family, who does not neglect the commands of God. They are committed to rhythm of worship, even if it means traveling roughly the distance from Amarillo to Plainview on foot. Every year. Together.

Now, men, we don't hear a lot from Joseph. He's a quiet figure in the Bible, as far as we can tell. He probably dies when Jesus was relatively young, so he doesn't show up again after this event. But with Joseph, we see a quiet, humble, honorable obedience to God and here we see that he is taking his family to church, so to speak. Joseph was a small business man, probably a dedicated worker, and two weeks off to hoof it down to Jerusalem for religious ceremonies might not seem like most attractive way to spend his off time. Yet, here he is, leading his family, year after year, down to Jerusalem to offer the appropriate of a lamb as a family. And now, Jesus, on the cusp of becoming a man in Jewish tradition is learning from his adoptive father, the value of right worship toward God. Men, perhaps we can learn something about leading a godly family from Joseph. We have a responsibility to lead our families in worship. That includes coming to gathered worship here at Redeemer, or scattered worship with a Community Group. That includes family worship that involves reading the Bible as a family. If your kids are little, an age appropriate Storybook Bible is appropriate. It means praying with and for your wives and children. I like Nancy Guthrie's One Year Dinner-Table Devotional when we sit down for a meal. My kids aren't Jesus, and they get distracted, but the little nuggets of thought that we talk about at the dinner table show back up later.

Men, part of leading your family means preaching the gospel by asking for forgiveness when we sin against our wives and children. In every way possible, in every opportunity God gives us, we are to be agents of the Gospel in the lives of our wives and children. They are our first mission field.

Single guys, don't tune me out, either. Are you taking steps to become the kind of man who can lead one of God's daughters into worship? Are you cultivating habits of prayer and Scripture reading in your daily life? Do you practice repenting of sin you commit against your friends and family? Are you consistently at church or in Community Groups? If you are not taking steps to lead yourself in worship, it will be difficult to learn how to lead your wife and kids in worship when the time comes. If you're dating or engaged, lead out in getting you and your potential future bride signed up for pre-marital. We've got a class starting in a few weeks and you can sign up in the foyer on your way out. Take point in making sure you guys go every week.

Gals, look for men like that, who will lead you to church, who will lead you to worship. Don't settle for men who will flatter you or who aren't even Christians. You will find yourself in a painful disconnect between yourself and your husband and God if that happens. I've seen it happen in families and it's tragic. The kids are confused about who God even is. They don't see Dad engaged in worship and they don't value it themselves. They usually don't grow up worshiping Jesus and instead walk away from the faith barring some miraculous move of God.

(Married Women?)

For some of you, that is your family. It was anything but godly. Maybe it was full of spiritual apathy, where everyone was kind and respectful, but no thought was given to how the family related to God. Or maybe your family was filled with abuse and heartbreak. Perhaps, devastatingly, your family was filled with spiritual abuse where Dad used the Bible to bully everyone else into submission. Despite

appearances, that's not really a godly family because Dad isn't leading you in worship of God. He's forcing you to worship him.

In Jesus' godly family, though, we do see Mom *and* Dad engaged in worship and bringing their Son into their rhythms of worship toward the true God. They are leading him into the fulfillment of God's commands for his people, something that Jesus must do to be able to stand in our place at the cross, before his heavenly Father. Because a godly family is inadequate, and sometime unavailable, it is not the ultimately point of this story. While Jesus' godly family has much to teach us, this story is really about **the Family of God.**

Jesus and his family had probably traveled in a caravan with friends and extended family from Nazareth to Jerusalem to protect themselves from the bandits that plagued the country-side. When it time for everyone to pack up and get home, the family doesn't notice that Jesus has stayed behind. Perhaps Mary and her husband, Jesus' adoptive father, Joseph, think he is which another family member or friend. Perhaps they aren't traveling together themselves and Joseph is with the men talking about the chariot races and the latest carpentry technology and Mary is with the gals and since Jesus is 12, on the cusp between boyhood and manhood, they think he's with the other. We're not sure exactly what is going on, but it is entirely plausible they could have got out of Jerusalem without their son.

Luke tell us that it was a day before they noticed Jesus was not with the caravan. British theologian, N.T. Wright takes this as a testimony to the close-knit nature of the ancient extended family. Everyone was in everyone's business and Jesus was nearly a man in Hebrew culture, so it would have been safe to assume that he

was with the caravan somewhere. No one realized they had “Kevin McAllister-ed” him back in Jerusalem. Once they figured out that Jesus wasn’t there for supper, they turned around and went back.

Now, if you’ve ever misplaced a child, or they’ve wandered off, its easy to get worked into a panic. If I lose track of Penelope for 3 seconds in Target, I’m freaking out. That’s a scary situation to say the least. By the time Mary and Joseph make it back to Jerusalem, probably on the third day including the trip out and the trip back in, they find Jesus sitting in the Temple with the teachers of the law. Not just sitting with them, but taking in their instruction. He is actively learning from them, asking good questions, responding to their questions with answers that demonstrate not that he simply knows the law, but that get at the heart of what God was doing for his people when he gave them the law. There are echoes of **Psalm 119:9 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.**

Now, Luke is careful not to give us the impression that Jesus was the one doing the teaching. The boy Jesus had to live a human life and part of that life is learning and growing and Jesus demonstrates here that he is teachable and curious. What blew the mind of the teachers in the Temple was that Jesus “got it”. At a gut level, in the midst of his humanity - which was all these teachers could see - he had an innate sense of what the Bible was promising to God’s people. He knew the right questions to ask about it and how to navigate it. And to be honest, that shouldn’t be all that surprising to us because Jesus knows his True Father.

When Mary and Joseph find Jesus, and are walking away with him, and Mary berates him, saying “**Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I**

have been searching for you in great distress?” Jesus responds by asking, “Why were you looking for me? Did you no know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

What might be lost to us, people who are now used to God being called our Father, is that this was not normal in the Jewish world. The entire Old Testament only refers to God as Father 14 times. And in each of those times, God was called Father not in a personal, individual sense, but in a national sense. God was the “Father of Israel”. But here Jesus is calling the infinite God of the Universe, “My Father.” This is a deity claim. No one has the right to call God their Father unless they themselves are part of the God-head. A creature of a different species can’t call God their Father. Jesus knows that he does not merely have a godly family on earth, but that He is a part of God’s Family. He is the True Son and his Father is the True Father. Where else would Jesus be, but in the presence of his Father, studying his Father’s commands, doing his Father’s work. Theologian I. Howard Marshall said, “This event was a temporary unveiling of Jesus’ relationship with his Father; it remained a ‘secret epiphany’, a momentary glimpse through a curtain into a private room.”¹

Jesus’ earthly, godly family is limited in scope and they are not perfect. (Our families are not perfect. Incomplete. The Family of God is better.) Obviously - they forgot him in Jerusalem. The Protestant Reformer, John Calvin says of Mary’s rebuke, “The manner of her complaint, as if she had received an injury, shows how ready we are by nature to defend our own rights, even without paying regard to God.”² We are

¹ I. Howard Marshall, [*The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 129-130.

² John Calvin and William Pringle, [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#), vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 170.

tempted, like Mary here, to make our godly family, our priorities, our rights the most important thing. And then we expect Jesus or God or some conception we have about the divine to owe us those things. But Jesus sitting in the Temple saying, “I must be in my Father’s house” is declaring that His True Father exceeds the value of his godly family and it to his true family that Jesus’ loyalty lies. God isn’t about our priorities. Rather, God has a set plan, a mission, and Jesus, because he knows his father, knows his part in that plan.

I don’t mean to put down a godly family life that works to disciple our kids. Jesus does leave the temple and go with his family. But what I am saying is that is far more important for us to understand who Jesus. He is God’s True Son. God is his True Father. And when we know Jesus as the True Son of God, and God as his True Father, only then can truly begin grow a godly family.

If we attempt to parent or husband or wife, or even be child that respects and honors our parents out of our own power, we will grow bitter toward those to whom we are obliged, especially sense those people are also sinners and will never pay us back in kind. We will be guilty of making an idol out of our family. That is, we will be making our family more important to us than God himself. An idol is anything that we love more than God. God is not asking us to be an honorable child or husband or wife simply for its own sake. Instead, God has given us his Son as sacrifice for our sins and as a source of adoption into God’s family. This being, Jesus, humanity and God intermixed into one, who can truly call God his Father, also invites us to call God our Father through adoption. That’s why Paul can come back later and say in Ephesians, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has**

blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved³”.

Jesus was sitting in the Temple because that was his Father’s house, and he was learning the Father’s law and commandments because Jesus knew who he was and he knew his Father. He could have stayed a compliant child to Mary and Joseph. He could have, as an adult, come home when she asked him to in Matthew 12 instead of preaching the coming of the Kingdom of God and getting himself crucified. He could have kept working in his adoptive earthly father Joseph’s carpenter shop, carrying on the family business. When Jesus revisits Jerusalem in the last days of his life, he does so on the mission that his heavenly true Father gave him; to die to reconcile us to our God and bring us into his family. (Jesus had to leave Jerusalem as a boy so he could he return and die as a man). Now, we can know our Heavenly Father, we can begin to understand his commandments and law. We can understand his mission for us to help as many people as possible know our adoptive heavenly Father.

One of the best things about the family of God is that it is always growing. Luke ends this section of Scripture by noting that “**Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.**⁴ (Lk 2:52)” Jesus didn’t show up to alienate

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Eph 1:3-6.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 2:52.

human beings. That did happen. But Jesus came into our world to win over human beings to his extended Family, the church. And Because Jesus honored his heavenly Father to the point that he died for us, more and more people can join his family. And we have the honor as adopted children in that family of telling others about God's True Son who has paid the adoption fee for us to join the family of God.

Redeemer, may we be a people like Jesus, who know our True Father God. May we know the freedom that he offers us to build godly families, even when our pasts may not feel very godly. And may we, like Jesus, invite others into the big, growing family of God we call the church.

(Expand section on idolatry of family)

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Community Discussion Starters

1. What habits can you foster to build a godly family? What habits hinder you as you try to build a godly family or prepare to build a godly family?
2. Jesus demonstrates a humble teach-ability in his youth by sitting in the Temple with the teachers, asking them questions. How can you posture yourself to be taught? By others? By Scripture?
3. Ultimately Jesus submits to his heavenly Father's will over his earthly family. What otherwise good things hold you back from obedience to God?