

GOING INTO THE FAMILY BUSINESS

LUKE 2:41-52

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Going Into The Family Business

Luke 2:41-52

In studying through the life of Christ, we must remember that the Gospels differ from one another not only in writing style, but in the particular events they choose to record. For example, between Jesus' birth and baptism, we only have two events recorded from His childhood. Matthew records the visit from the Eastern Magi, Herod's massacre of children, and the Holy Family's trip to Egypt. Luke records Jesus' circumcision and the prophecies made over Him in the temple by Simeon and Anna.

This morning Luke will record an event when Jesus was 12-years-old. Other than this event, we don't know anything about Jesus' childhood. Several years ago, Hillary Clinton made a saying very popular, "It takes a village to raise a child." That really is true for life in general, but in the Christian life, it is even truer.

The Bible makes it clear that if we are believers, then God is our Father, Jesus is our Savior, and the Holy Spirit indwells each of us. Therefore, as God's children, we are part of His family. We often miss the full definition of church. Certainly in our everyday lives and experiences, the church is a building where we as God's children meet regularly. However, the church building only has this significance because of the Bible's definition of church. In Greek, the word for church is ecclesia. The word literally means called out. The other word in Greek that used to describe the meeting place of Jews locally was synagogue. This word means to gather together. So in reality the church is the people who God has called out of the world and gathered together under the Headship of Jesus and the bonding together of the Holy Spirit. So church primarily refers to God's chosen people. We are the church and the building we chose to gather together in each week is called a church.

We are God's family and His expectation is that we carry on the work Jesus started when He lived on earth. Listen to how Jesus described His ministry:

"16He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 17The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me

to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind,

to release the oppressed,

19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

20Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:16-21 / NIV).

Jesus came to preach the Good News of salvation. He came to heal people from their physical, emotional, and spiritual illnesses. He came to minister to the poor and the downtrodden. As His children, He expects us to continue on with the family business. We as the church are expected to excel at the family business. Listen to what Jesus says about this:

“12I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” John 14:12-14 / NIV).

We are supposed to come to church because we are children and as God's children we are expected to work in the family business. However, sometimes I think people come to church for a whole host of other reasons. For example, one day I was out for a walk and saw one of our church members. I went over to him and said, “Hey George, it's been really nice to see you in church with your wife so regularly this past year.”

George replied, “It's really a matter of choice. I'd rather listen to your sermons than listen to hers.”

Well obviously, George wasn't coming to church for the right reasons. Don't get me wrong, I'm glad people come, but I'd like us to get some insight into who we are and what we are supposed to be doing. The main idea of this morning's text is this. **SINCE WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, HE EXPECTS US TO GO INTO THE FAMILY BUSINESS.** Again, let me remind us that we are called to tell people about God's love for them and lead them to faith in Christ. We are called to minister to one another and to this lost and hurting world. Jesus had a real sense of mission and destiny from a very early age.

I. FAMILY BUSINESS MEETINGS

Like all good and successful businesses, verses 41-44 describe family business meetings. **CHRISTIANITY IS A BUSINESS RUN FROM OUR FAMILY HOME.** We are not a money making business. Our only business is to carry on God's business. The church is the place where we gather together for training, for recharging, for empowering, and for healing. The church becomes a hub for our activities.

Verse 41 reminds us that we are to be gathering for worship. Here again we are reminded by Luke that Joseph and Mary take their religious faith seriously. Jews were required to attend one of the major festivals in Jerusalem each year. Actually, only adult males were required to attend. However, Luke informs us that Mary and Joseph attended the Passover celebration every year.

This was quite a commitment for a blue-collar middleclass family. They were dedicated to worshipping in Jerusalem. Even though Mary and Joseph were not fully aware of this, their Son would grow up to be the ultimate Passover Lamb. Passover celebrated God's mighty work on behalf of His chosen people. Israel had been slaves in Egypt. Life was bitter for them and there seemed to be no hope for their future. In a very short period of time, literally overnight, God set them free. He destroyed Egypt and left it in ruins. The Hebrews left with gold, silver, riches, and livestock. God made them into a nation and later settled them into the Promised Land.

Jesus' mission is to set us free from our slavery to fear, to sin, to Satan, to lust, and to death. Jesus came to make us His children and His chosen people. We can see that Joseph and Mary were dedicated to God and demonstrated their love and faithfulness through worship. This kind of trip would be an expensive financial commitment. They would have to close their carpenter shop for at least two weeks. Travel back and forth would take about a week. The Passover festival and the feast of Unleavened Bread took about 8 days. They would have to purchase a Passover Lamb to sacrifice. In order to participate in this worship service, it cost them time, money, and risk to make the journey.

We take worship for granted. We come when we can, give what's left over, and don't make many serious sacrifices. I know many people do, but I don't think most Christians in the United States sacrificially give of their time and money to the church. And many don't take many risks to evangelize, minister, or serve. Statistics show that in any normal church, 20% of the people provide 80% of the work and money to make the church run. Worship is important and should cost us time, money, and energy.

Verse 42 illustrates that the church is where we are in the business of training up future leaders. We don't know if they brought Jesus on these journeys every year, but Luke informs us that Jesus made the journey with them when He was 12-years-old. It was around 12 or 13 that boys made their commitment to follow the laws of God. It is referred to today as a Bar Mitzvah for boys and a Bat Mitzvah for girls. In terms of Christianity, infant baptism or dedication would be like the circumcision ceremony and Christian confirmation ceremonies or adult baptism would be like the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. At any rate, Mary and Joseph wanted to make sure that Jesus had all the religious experiences and education He needed to grow up to be a good solid believer.

I am sure that you have noticed that we at Devon Church place a high value on Christian Education. We are committed to raising up children to love and serve God. We have put a lot of time, effort, and money to make this a powerful ministry. We have been extraordinarily blessed by God to have the best children's minister in the whole Chicago-land area.

But it doesn't stop there. We as pastors take training seriously. We constantly participate in continuing education experience. We are continually training your board members and leaders in how to do ministry. We presently offer membership classes twice a year. We are working at starting several small groups and I would like to start teaching serious Bible Study in the near future. We view training up godly people and leaders as a primary mission for our church.

And we are reminded in verses 43-44 that it does take a village to raise a child. Since these types of journeys were dangerous, they usually traveled in caravans. Most of us here at Devon Church are no more than one or two generations from our families immigrating to the United States. In the cultures we come from, extended family is a very important concept. As we grew up, we

were raised not only by our mothers and fathers, but we were cared for by extended family: grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends, relatives, and neighbors. It would be a natural assumption that Jesus was with His cousins, friends, or other relatives as they traveled home.

When I dedicate children or baptize people here, I remind all of us that this child or new convert is part of our family. We are responsible to care for and to nurture them as we encourage them in their faith journey. If it is the case that it takes a village to bring one another to spiritual maturity, then that places an incredible obligation on each one of us to be studying and growing in our faith so that what we pass on to others is true and edifying. Too many times people pass on faulty theology. We must dedicate ourselves to becoming healthy and spiritual individuals who together make a healthy and spiritual village to raise children and new believers. We are in the business of growing healthy Christians. **CHRISTIANITY IS A BUSINESS RUN FROM OUR FAMILY HOME.** I really am hoping that as we grow, many people will take an interest in our church as a gathering of believers who meet here in God's house to do God's will. I'm hoping more than the average 20% of people fall in love with God and give sacrificially of their time, energy, and money.

II. LEARNING THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Verses 45-50 show us what learning the family business is all about. In Christianity, **WE LEARN THE FAMILY BUSINESS THROUGH ON THE JOB TRAINING.** In other words, we learn by observing, studying, and practicing. Verses 45-46 illustrate that it takes serious study and observation to become proficient. Jesus' parents are now getting a little panicky. They searched the caravan, asked all their friends and relatives if they had seen Him, but nobody had. All of us as parents who have even lost our children for a few seconds know what kind of feeling we experience in the pit of our stomachs. It is a very sick, scary feeling. Since they had been traveling for a day, Joseph and Mary leave the safety of the caravan and hightail it back to Jerusalem. I can't even begin to imagine how crazy they must have been feeling. Luke tells us they searched for Him for 3 days in Jerusalem. How would we feel if God gave us a very special child and we lost him or her in Chicago and we couldn't find them for 3 days? So Joseph and Mary are probably imagining the worst. What if some foreigners kidnapped Him, and sold Him in a foreign land as a slave? They may never see their Son again.

But as luck or leading would have it, they found Jesus in the temple courts diligently learning about the Hebrew Scriptures and Hebrew faith. He enrolled Himself in the school. Luke wants us to know that Jesus was engaged in His education. He was listening to the teachers and He was asking them questions. This was the typical method of education during that time.

It is discouraging for me to know that most people who claim to be Christians don't regularly read and study the Bible. Most Christians are not even interested in learning more about the Christian faith. If we expect to make it through persecution and difficult times, we need to know our Bibles backwards and forwards.

As we learn to think and act biblically, we will be able as a community to recognize special talents and gifts in each other as described in verse 47 and the first half of verse 48. It says that when the people observed Jesus they were amazed and His parents were astonished. Notice, this is not the time yet where Jesus becomes an adversary to the religious leaders. The people are

amazed at His ability to learn and to engage. Nevertheless, people realized that there was something intellectually and spiritually deep about this young man called Jesus.

One of most tragic things I have seen in church life and I guess in life in general is when people think they have a special gift, talent, or knowledge, when they really don't. Okay, I have to confess one of my vices. I love to go to Karaoke bars and watch all the people who think they have talent but don't. I'm kind of ashamed to say this, but I encourage them to go on. We would go out with a group of friends and have a couple of drinks. I'm not being sexist here but the girls in our group were the most fun. They couldn't carry a tune in a bucket, but they would get into the song. When they got up to sing, we would light matches and our lighters like they do at rock concerts. When the girls would see this, they would really get into it, make faces as they sang and danced as if they were superstars. It really is funny.

In Karaoke, it may be funny, but in the church and in society, it's not very funny when people who think they have special gifts or talents start to use them. They can actually destroy communities and churches.

We must know our Bibles. We must be good empathic listeners. We must be involved in each other's lives. Most of all, we must be lovingly truthful. Don't tell people they are doing a good job if they are not. On the other hand, when you notice a gift or talent in someone, encourage them. The key is to love both the individual and the community. If you lie to someone, then you hurt both them and the community. If you fail to acknowledge a gift in someone, you deprive the individual and the community of that person's gift. Part of being in the Christian community is to help people discover their gifts and talents.

In the second half of verse 49 and 50 we must gain an understanding of priorities. Mary did what any loving parent would do. First she probably grabbed Him, hugged Him, and kissed Him telling Jesus how much she loved Him. Then after that she backed up and mildly scolded Him saying, "Why did You do this to us? We were worried sick about You."

Jesus answered, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" In this section, Joseph is referred to as Jesus' father but here Jesus mildly corrects this by referring to God as His father. There is no disrespect meant here for Joseph because Jesus is obedient and respectful to Joseph as His father as He grows up in Nazareth.

This is something we all need to remember. It doesn't matter if we were loved by our birth parents, mistreated by our birth parents, or even abandoned by our birth parents. Listen to what the Scriptures say about people who give themselves to Jesus in faith:

"12 ... to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13 / NIV).

If we are Christians, our Father is God. Our priority in life should be to love God, to obey God, and to serve God. Everything else in life comes after our relationship with God. Jesus made the point very clear that if we make God our first priority, everything else in life will fall in place. Jesus said:

"33 ... seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33 / NIV).

Jesus always prayed for God The Father's will to be done in His life. I hope our priorities in life are right and that our prayers are like Jesus'. I hope we learn to pray and live the motto, "Not my will God, but Yours." We need to read and study our Bibles, give and receive feedback in the context of community, and we need to live our lives with pleasing God as our main priority. In other words, WE LEARN THE FAMILY BUSINESS THROUGH ON THE JOB TRAINING.

III. GROWING THE FAMILY BUSINESS

The text says that Mary and Joseph didn't have a clue as to what Jesus told them. I'm sure they were just happy to have Him back, safe and sound. We know that God is in the business of saving souls and making people whole. He has chosen to make us partners in the family business. Verses 51-52 remind us that we are to be growing the family business. In other words, WE ARE EXPECTED TO GET PROFICIENT AT THE FAMILY BUSINESS AND TO GROW IT. For us that means that we are commanded to grow in our faith and we are expected to contribute to the growth and health of our church by exercising our spiritual gifts and sharing our talents and resources.

The first sign of a good leader is the fact that he or she is a good follower. In the first half of verse 51 we learn that Jesus practiced obedience. This is an incredible sentence, "Then He went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. We know that Jesus started His public ministry at about 30-years-old. He spent His time learning about God and theology by studying in the local synagogue and no doubt Joseph and Mary taught Him as well. Jesus learned about life working with His father as a carpenter. We know from the rest of the Gospels that Jesus loved Mary. This is actually the last time Joseph appears in Jesus' life so he must have died sometime before Jesus turned 30.

Obedience and submission are things that every Christian must grow and excel in. If we have not learned to be obedient to God and to those in authority over us, we can never become good leaders. The Bible says that Jesus learned obedience by what He suffered. We must practice submission and obedience. Good leaders must first demonstrate they are good followers. Good teachers must first demonstrate they are good students. Paul told the young pastor Timothy:

"Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others ..." (I Timothy 5:22 / NIV).

Before putting people in leadership positions, church leaders must be sure that these potential leaders have proved themselves to be good, submissive, and obedient Christians.

The second half of verse 51 reminds us that reflection is important in our growth as Christians. Here is another time that Mary ponders a supernatural message. She pondered the message given to her by the angel Gabriel. Here she ponders the words of Jesus. I know that we live very full and hectic lives. We don't spend much time reflecting on what God has done in our lives, what He is doing in our lives, or what He intends to do with us in the future. I know in my own life I spend most of my time doing rather than being. Even my devotional life is filled with activity. I read the Bible, study the Bible, memorize the Bible and pray. But I don't often quiet myself and just "be" with God. I want to spend much more time reflecting. The text this morning said that Mary treasured these things in her heart. I know that God has worked many

miracles in my life. I know that He has done great things in my life. When I stop and think about it, I become thankful and overwhelmed with love. Here is why I think it is so important to be reflective. God usually works with us in unique ways. I can see how God has worked with me in the past. When I take time to slow down and reflect, I can often identify things He is doing with me in the present.

We know that Jesus spent a lot of time in prayer, meditation, and reflection. The Bible seems to indicate that even though He was God, He drew a great deal of spiritual insight and strength from these.

We are expected to grow in our faith. We are expected to grow intellectually in our faith by reading and studying the Bible. We are expected to grow relationally with God. We do that through meditation, reflection, and prayer. We are expected to grow behaviorally. We do that through practicing obedience.

Verse 52 reminds us that living organisms are characterized by growth. Luke says that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and people. In our modern world, we tend to equate wisdom with knowledge of facts. However, in the Hebrew world and the world of the Bible, wisdom is the ability to apply God's Word to everyday situations. In other words, a wise person is one who knows the Bible backwards and forwards, and is able to apply the truths of Scripture to everyday problems and situations. A wise person is one who is saturated with the truths of Scriptures and speaks, thinks, and lives them.

Jesus grew in stature. He matured physically into a man and became part of society. He became a carpenter while studying and preparing for His ministry. I want to remind us that all of the events in our lives ought to be God-centered and purposeful. Everything we go through in life is meant to bring us closer to God and make us more like Jesus. Purposeful living prepares us to accomplish all God has planned for us.

And Luke states that as Jesus grew up He found favor with God and people. If we are allowing the Holy Spirit to manifest His fruit in us, then we will be living lives that please God. It is His will that we bear this type of fruit. I am going to list the fruit of the Spirit, and as I do, think about how you would like to have a friend who was: loving, joyful, peace-making, patient, kind, good, gentle, faithful, and self-controlled? Wouldn't it be great to have a friend like that? That is the kind of friend Jesus expects us to be to others. When we are, we will be able to minister effectively. Submissive and obedient attitudes, taking time to reflect on what God is doing in our lives, and growing in our Christian faith will enable us to accomplish all that God has planned for us. **WE ARE EXPECTED TO GET PROFICIENT AT THE FAMILY BUSINESS AND TO GROW IT.** If we follow in Jesus' footsteps and continue to complete the work He started, we will grow as individuals and our church will grow like wildfire. If we are Christians, then God has given us a spiritual gift. He has given us talents and resources to share with the church. In other words, **SINCE WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, HE EXPECTS US TO GO INTO THE FAMILY BUSINESS.**

The church really is the way God chose to conduct His business on earth. We are part of the family business and we must always remember that the church is built on the Rock, Jesus Christ. And everything we do cannot fail if we continue to build on the Rock. Listen to this story that Gregory Elder writes about his childhood:

“Growing up on the Atlantic Coast, I spent long hours working on intricate sand castles; whole cities would appear beneath my hands.

One year, for several days in a row, I was accosted by bullies who smashed my creations. Finally I tried an experiment: I placed cinder blocks, rocks, and chunks of concrete in the base of my castles. Then I built the sand kingdoms on the top of the rocks.

When the local toughs appeared (and I disappeared), their bare feet suddenly met their match.

Many people see the church in grave peril from a variety of dangers: secularism, politics, heresies, or plain old sin. They forget that the church is built upon a Rock (Matt. 16:16), over which the gates of hell itself shall not prevail.”

Let's remember this here at Devon Church. The Lord is in the business of saving souls and making people whole. That's the business we are in. If we continue to build on the Rock, nothing can stop us from doing great things here.