

INCREASING IN WISDOM AND FAVOR

February 21, 2016

By Pastor Stan

Luke 2:39-52

PASTOR STAN WEESE

SERMON SERIES: THE MAN CHRIST JESUS: EXPLORING CHRIST'S HUMANITY

SERMON TITLE: "INCREASING IN WISDOM & FAVOR"

SCRIPTURE TEXT: LUKE 2:39-52 (P. 855)

TOPIC: CHRIST

DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2016

copyright 2016 by Stan Weese

INTRO.

-- As a way of preparing ourselves for the Easter season, we are using the weeks between now and then to spend some time reflecting on Christ's humanity. Today, we're going to do that by considering the Bible's only story about Jesus during His childhood years. That story is recorded by Luke in the second chapter of his Gospel.

Cf., Luke 2 (p. 857)

-- Last week we started this series with the great passage about Christ in Philippians 2, where Paul tells us that person called Jesus was God the Son, the second person of the Trinity who took on a real human body, fully God and fully man. This second chapter of Luke covers Jesus' life from His birth to the end of His childhood. Throughout this chapter we find an alternating interplay between Jesus' deity and His humanity.

The chapter begins with the great Christmas story of Jesus' birth. We see Jesus' humanity in the fact that He entered this world by being born to Mary, being wrapped in cloths and laid in a manger. In addition, we see Jesus deity displayed when the night of Jesus' birth the coal-black sky blazed with the shekinah glory of God as the angel announced to the shepherds the newborn baby that they would find lying in a manger was none other than Christ the Lord.

Then we see both the humanity and deity of Jesus in the rituals that took place following Jesus' birth. As prescribed in Leviticus 12, Jesus was circumcised eight days after His birth, and then 40 days after the birth Mary and Joseph took Jesus to present Him to the Lord at the Temple and to offer the purification sacrifice required for Mary following her pregnancy and delivery. These rituals were observed with the birth of every male baby in Israel. But while at the Temple, something happened that revealed that Jesus wasn't like every other baby - that He was unique. First, an elderly man named Simeon, who had never met Mary or Joseph or Jesus before, came up to them and took Jesus in his arms and declared Him to be the long awaited Messiah. And when Simeon had finished, an elderly prophetess named Anna, again who had never met the family before, also came up and proclaimed the baby Jesus to be the Messiah.

-- All of that takes place in verses 1-39. So the first 39 verses of Luke 2 cover the first 40 days of Jesus' life. Then in verse 40 we read:

Cf., v. 40

Summarized there in that one short verse is Jesus' life from infancy to 12 years of age. A similar statement occurs at the end of the chapter in verse 52.

Cf., v. 52

That verse summarizes Jesus' life from 12 to 30 years of age.

Those 2 similar verses function as bookends to an incident that took place when Jesus was 12 years old, described in verses 41-51.

Luke 2:41-51

I. The Story (vv. 41-51)

A. Passover in Jerusalem

-- Devout Jewish men went Jerusalem for 3 feasts each year - Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Joseph not only did that but also took along Mary and Jesus. This incident from Jesus' childhood took place during the family's trip to Jerusalem for Passover when Jesus was 12 years old. That's an important age because it means that Jesus was on the threshold of becoming a "son of the commandment" (what we know today as a bar mitzvah), which also means that Jesus will be able to participate fully in synagogue activities.

B. Jesus Is Missing! (vv. 43-44)

-- The family stayed in Jerusalem for Passover and the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread and then started the journey back to their home in Nazareth. It was a trip of about 80 miles that would take about 4 days. Most likely, they were part of a caravan of other family and friends from Nazareth. Generally, the women and younger children went first, followed by the men and teenage boys/young men.

-- But this time, when the group left, Luke tells us that "Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem." What Luke is telling us that this is no accident on Jesus' part; Jesus intentionally stayed there without saying anything to Mary and Joseph.

-- The group traveled for an entire day, and it was only when they stopped to set up camp for the night that Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus wasn't with them.. They went searching for Jesus, and no one has seen Jesus since they left Jerusalem. This is the ancient version of Home Alone.

So how could this happen? How could Mary and Joseph go an entire day without Jesus? Luke says that they were "supposing him to be in the group." Most likely, Joseph thought that Jesus was with Mary and the other women and children, probably the part of the caravan that Jesus had always traveled with on previous trips. Mary, on the other hand, assumed that Jesus, ready to become a "son of the commandment" saw Himself as a man and was traveling with Joseph and the men. Furthermore, Jesus was the very definition of a trustworthy and responsible son; so they had no reason to even think that He had deliberately left the group.

C. Back to Find Jesus (vv. 45-47)

-- So Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem and set about on a frantic search for the missing son. Luke says that "After three days they found him." Most likely, the three days included the one day that they had traveled without knowing that Jesus wasn't with them, the one day that it took them to return to Jerusalem, and a third day of searching throughout the city. Worried and probably fearing the worst of scenarios, Joseph and Mary searched throughout the entire city, and finally started to search the Temple grounds and there in the Temple courts where the rabbis gathered their disciples to instruct them on the Scriptures the frazzled parents find the missing son, sitting in front of the great biblical scholars, listening to their teachings, asking them probing questions and even making comments that displayed a remarkable insight into God's Word, especially for a 12-year-old boy.

D. The Exchange Between Mary & Jesus (vv. 48-50)

-- Mary is the first to speak and gives Jesus a much milder rebuke than what my parents would have given me.

v. 48

Like a good Jewish mother, Mary goes for the guilt and shame inducing "How could you treat us like this? We've been searching everywhere for you! We've been worried sick over you!"

-- But Jesus doesn't respond as expected, with shame or apology. Rather, He makes a rather unexpected and even stunning reply.

v. 49

-- "Why would you need to search everywhere for me," Jesus asks. "You should have known where I'd be - in My Father's house," making it clear that His Father was not Joseph but God.

E. Concluding Remarks (vv. 51-52)

-- Then Luke concludes this story with two remarks:

(1) v. 51, that Jesus went back to Nazareth and remained a submissive son, letting us know that this incident was not some an episode of preteen rebellion.

(2) v. 52, that Jesus continued to grow and develop physically, spiritually and socially.

Verse 52 summarizes the next 18 years of Jesus' life. The next time we meet Jesus in chapter 3, He will 30 and starting His earthly ministry.

II. The Purpose of the Story

-- As I said, this is the only story from Jesus' childhood years recorded in the Bible. Why would Luke record this particular incident?

A. The Key to the Story is verse 49.

-- Mary had said "your father and I have been searching..."

Jesus' reply is the first words that Jesus speaks in the Bible.

v.49

-- In His first statement in the Bible Jesus says, "...I must be in my Father's house."

The purpose of this story is to let us know that by the time that He was 12 years of age Jesus had a clear understanding that Joseph, the man that everyone assumed to be Jesus' father, wasn't His father. At 12 years of age Jesus knew that God was His true Father. Jesus knew that He had a unique relationship with God the Father and had been sent by the Father to per form a unique mission.

-- In His reply to Mary, Jesus says "Why did you think you needed to look anywhere else for me? This should have been the first place you looked - here in My Father's house. He is the one I treasure

above all. His Word is my delight. His will is my passion.

B. The "Bookends" of the Story (vv. 40, 52)

-- As I close, I want to say a word about the "bookends" of this important story, for they give us insight into Jesus' humanity.

vv. 40, 52

1. Verse 40 summarizes Jesus' life from infancy to 12 years of age and tells us how Jesus came to the understanding that God was His Father. What Luke tells us is that the first 12 years of Jesus' life were years of growing, just as they are for all boys. One of the ways that Jesus grew was in wisdom, understanding of the things of God. But Jesus is God; so why would He need to grow in wisdom? Remember in the passage we looked at last week? In Philippians 2:7 Paul says that when Christ took on our human form, He "emptied himself." That doesn't mean that He quit being God, but it means that He somehow limited His access to and use of His attributes as God, such as His omniscience. Jesus had to grow in His understanding of the things of God the same way we do - through reading, studying and meditating in God's Word.

That's why Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem - so He could learn more about God's Word, so He could take advantage of the world-class instruction in God's Word from the great scholars who were in Jerusalem for Passover.

Certainly, Mary and Joseph had instructed Jesus in the Word of God and had told Jesus the stories of His birth. Then the Spirit built on that instruction as Jesus spent time reading, studying, and meditating on the Scriptures. As Jesus spent time reading and learning about God's Word, the Spirit opened Jesus heart and mind to the marvelous truths about the Messiah and brought Jesus to understand that He was the One who would fulfill it all.

2. Luke closes this story in verse 52.

v. 52

-- At 12 Jesus had grown greatly in understanding God's Word and in understanding His relationship with the Father and His mission given by the Father. But it would take another 18 years for Jesus to prepare for the earthly ministry in which He would fulfill the mission to redeem lost sinners - 18 more years of growing in the things of God by learning from the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

Luke records all this so that we might see how much Jesus desired the Word of God and how critical it was to Jesus' growth and preparation to fulfill the Father's plans. And I have to think that as Luke recorded this story he prayed that all those who would read it in the generations to come would be moved by Jesus' example also delight in the Word of God.

A closing word to parents, to youth, and to all of us.

Parents: this story emphasizes the importance of making sure that your children are learning the Bible, that they are getting their lives rooted in the stories and truths of God's Word.

Children & Teens: This story calls on you to be eager to learn about the Bible, to prepare yourself for life by hearing it, reading it, studying it.

All of us: This story is a call for all of us to desire God's Word - to delight in it, to read and study and meditate in it. That's how Jesus grew spiritually during His humanity - the same way that we can.