



## Luke 2:41-51

### About my Father's business

One characteristic of modern life is that very few people today follow in their Father (or Mother's) footsteps. It was expected in years gone by for people to enter into the family business or occupation. I've already mentioned that my Great-Great Grandfather and my Great Grandfather were both publicans, but my grandfather never followed them, preferring to go to war under-age and ending up wounded and pensioned from the army, went for the gentler(!) occupation of being a winch man down several South Wales mines. He had no sons to follow in his stead.

#### IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS

There are no lack of well-known father-son examples where sons have followed in the family occupation.

#### BRUNELS

SADDAM HUSSEIN

KIRK & MICHAEL DOUGLAS

HARRY & JAIME REDKNAPP

JANET ELLIS AND SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR

#### JESUS WAS EXPECTED TO JOIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Needless to say, Jesus was expected to follow in the family business of carpentry. We often think of carpentry being a humble occupation, but in fact in the first century, wood was the main construction material for almost anything. It was a skilled business and potentially lucrative. Jesus was not just going to be trained in the art of the plane and the lathe as the old hymn goes, but in the maths needed to keep accounts (yes, they had to do their accounts in those days too) and in the language of the market-place (Greek). He was destined to be literate and numerate as well.

In addition, we read that the family went to Jerusalem EVERY YEAR. Not everyone went every year – most people couldn't afford it. Joseph could and he and Mary would have made sure that Jesus was also well-versed in the Torah because they were clearly a zealous Jewish family. But even the event we read about shocked them.

You see, up until 12 children were children but from that age onwards, Jesus was considered to have become a man and it was time for him to enter the family business. From then on, it would be expected that Jesus would have the equivalent of the modern Bar Mitzvah and would enter the family occupation as well as learning more advanced things about the Jewish law if he so desired, through the synagogue.

#### JESUS' DISAPPEARANCE WAS UNEXPECTED

Then what all parents dread happened: Jesus disappeared. Mary and Joseph got a day out of Jerusalem before they realised that he wasn't with someone else but had been left behind – or worse! It was pretty clear by their reactions that Jesus did not do this kind of thing usually. It was unexpected.

They found him in the temple, discussing things of the faith with the scholars who were amazed at His grasp of spiritual things. The parents gave him the nth degree – how much they had been worried, how inconsiderate, what was he thinking of and probably "I never knew you were THAT interested in spiritual things!"

Jesus just gives them the reply: *"Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?"* Perhaps a translations that's nearer the mark is the old AV one – actually I'll give it to you in the NKJV *"Didn't*

*you know I must be about my Father's business".* It's at that point that it hit home to them and stood out so boldly in Mary's memory that it eventually got picked up by Luke - Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit – His Father was God and Joseph was in effect a step-father. Jesus' family business was to do the things of God and at 12 he understood that was His responsibility. They had probably forgotten His amazing birth and the prophecy in the Temple – now the stark reminder was coming back as to Jesus' true paternity.

Of course Luke just records that after this event that Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them. That was also the Father's business: that Jesus should learn to be a human and pick up all the skills he needed to minister for His true Father effectively – so he was obedient to Mary and Joseph because that's where Jesus was placed by the Father. That's where he would gain His worldly skills – it was going to be another 18 years before His eloquence in spiritual things were to be recognised but the literacy and the numeracy, the skills of His craft and the ability to communicate with people in business were also part of becoming an effective and learned communicator.

As an aside, Luke picks on three significant dates in Jesus life – His first fortnight where Mary and Joseph presented him at the temple where they committed him to God, age 12 where he understood who His Father was, and then at the age of 30. It was about the age of 30 where people began to be recognised as senior in the community – because the average life expectancy was about 40! Jesus was recognised in Joseph's absence as the carpenter from Nazareth. People in Galilee knew him for His business activities and he could well have been up for becoming a town elder or something like that. What happened was that the Holy Spirit came on him at His baptism and immediately he was transformed into the rabbi he became. Significant dates.

#### **JESUS RECOGNISED HIS FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY**

It took 18 years of doing His Father's business before His apprenticeship in the things of God were over and he was off doing what God was preparing Him for. But it all started the day he realised that he needed to do the Father's business, even when that meant doing His father's business. What was the result of just being obedient to Mary and Joseph all those years? Verse 52: Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and people. Jesus made the right connection with God and as a result made the right connection with people. In Galilee as a carpenter he had profile but no-one seems to be particularly surprised about His becoming a rabbi – except perhaps for the people in Nazareth who never really thought that a son of Nazareth could be anything spiritually, that they missed this man of God growing up in their midst.

Do you know Jesus as your Saviour and Lord. If so God has adopted you into His family. You are a son of God with all the rights and responsibilities that brings. You get to inherit all the promises of God I keep raving on about! Yes but we live in a world with all its problems and responsibilities too. The problem is that we understand our responsibilities of life, but so often we forget about the fact that the Father has called us to be apprentices, disciples, in His business.

Too often we are so tied up in the business of life that, like Mary and Joseph we forget who's children we've become and our primary responsibility is to our adopted family and the Father God. Are we doing our business – or His? In fact do we know what God's business is for our lives? It's easy to assume that because we belong to the church, worship regularly, attend a home group, minister to other people or whatever that we are doing God's business. Jesus did God's business by being the carpenter of Nazareth for 18 years. That wasn't the career path of an aspiring rabbi but he got hold of a lot of skills that made him a stunning communicator and a good understanding of the human condition.

#### **OUR CHALLENGE FOR 2010**

Is to do God's business. Not our business. Not church business. Not Baptist business. Not tradition business. God's business. And how do we know what God's business is? Let me suggest three things

1. By knowing that sin isn't God's business.
2. By understanding the things of God – the Bible etc.
3. By knowing God and being able to recognise His voice.

The first two are easy-peasy. The third is difficult – we have to make the time to spend with God. As individuals and as a church. Our Father's business is doing His will. Don't just assume you are doing God's will just because you come to church, or are zealous. Mary and Joseph were zealous

and missed what it meant to have the Son of God growing up in their home! Doing my Father's will means spending time with God and learning how to recognise the voice of God.

At the end of last year I did a series on prayer. I got a lot of feedback with one dominant idea linking it: that many in the church see prayer as asking God for things; or if we feel we are being selfish, asking God to do something in someone else's life.

That's an unbalanced view of prayer. Prayer is talking with God – not talking to, talking with. Anybody who has done any counselling listens carefully and asks relevant questions on the basis of what they hear. The art is probably 80% listening and 10% speaking. In the temple, Jesus listened to what the teachers of the law said. He asked the awkward questions and they found he had better answers than them!

That's why I've only used the word prayer at the end. God wants us to talk with Him, yes. But we need to cultivate the art of hearing His voice and recognising His ways. It's an art we all need to cultivate because it will bring our minds in tune with His will. The our faith will be less hit and miss. Not necessarily easier I might add – but it will make more sense. Over the next few weeks I'm going to explore some themes from scripture about hearing the voice of God.

I'm going to finish the whole service this morning with a benediction, but I'll give it to you know because this is my discovery when I spend the time, the space, the discipline and the brokenness to hear the voice of God clearly.

***Eph 3:20-21 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. NIV***

## **ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS**

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