



4. About the Father's Business (Luke 2:41-52)

I'm probably going to revisit the birth of Jesus over the Christmas period, so for now we are jumping a period of just over twelve years from our previous sermon to another happening in the life of Jesus that stuck in Mary's mind. We again get those words that Mary treasured this incident just as she had pondered what had happened with the angels and shepherds when Jesus was born. She knew what Gabriel had said, what the angels said and here what Jesus had said. But she kept them in her heart. Amazing stories, but kept until she understood what it was all about and the Gospels indicate that this was not until after His resurrection. In this incident, Mary and Joseph simply just didn't understand.

So here we have it - another tale from the family of Jesus as given to Luke. It makes sense now, but didn't make sense then. It was a family trip to Jerusalem for the Passover. Again we see that the family were devout. Not every Jew went to the Passover every year. But remember, we know that Mary feared God - this was the sort of family that did take advantage of not being far from Jerusalem to walk there every year. In one sense, this was a good family for Jesus to be brought up in because it would have been one where God was honoured and the Scriptures learned - but nothing prepared them for what Jesus did in the twelfth year of His life.

Twelve was a significant year for Jesus. In all the previous years, He went as a child of the family, but 12 is the year of Bar Mitzvah - He had come of age and had an entitlement (and a responsibility to worship and make sacrifices on his own account). As it was the age of responsibility, it was now his duty to take on responsibility in the family's business. Joseph was a carpenter, so Jesus would now also be expected to take on the responsibilities of being a carpenter too.

We know what happened. When the family went home - Jesus stayed. Eventually they find Him in the Temple debating with, and confounding all the teachers of the law. His distraught parents said "Why did you do this to us?"

If you're parent this morning, it's a story that may resonate with you. You know - that time on the beach when the children got lost, the teenage habit of stopping out and not phoning home. You get worried. All the things that might happen to your children start to go through your head? And when you find them, it's a case of joy, relief and anger! "Where have you been?" "Just wait until I get you home".

Strange you may think. Wasn't He supposed to honour His father and mother? Why did he do this? First of all, Jesus had officially passed into manhood. It was 12 for them, 18 for us. He had a right to do what he did. But even more so when He uses the words *"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" or "about my Father's business"* His Father's house and His Father's business. As a 12 year old, He joined the family firm. Not carpentry, but the things of God because God was His Father and He knew it. He was taking responsibility for His Father's business.

Of course, they should have been aware because of the special circumstances of His birth - but they just didn't understand as verse 51 said. So we read how He continued to be subject to them *and Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.*

What do we learn from this passage?

- We need to be open to what God is doing before our eyes
Mary and Joseph should have seen it but in hindsight knew they had missed something important. They were so fixed in the way of their lives that they could not see the Son of the living God before their eyes. They could not see the significance of what God was doing. maybe we could argue that they had no spiritual perception, but it had been spelt out pretty

clearly to both Mary and Joseph who He was. Verse 40 (not read) says: *0 The child was growing, and was becoming strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.* Right in front of their eyes their child was developing spiritually and they missed it.

What has often been a challenge to me has been the way by which we so easily judge those who are not like us. It's the way the world works. We need to differentiate who we are to others - race, - colour, - class. And on that basis we make judgements about people. "If one is like it, then they all are like it". It's known as stereotyping. Our expectation of how things should be done is how we've done it and so often we don't see how it can be another way. That can lead to division, it can lead to suspicion, it can lead to favouritism, it can lead to discrimination, it can lead to hate, it can lead to war. Our land is full of it. And so is our religion.

But even though there are divisions, we still find a way of continuing to justify them. "We are biblical, we are evangelicals - we must be right" "We're Baptists, we don't do that". I was brought up within a denomination where we believed that we many thought that they the only ones going to heaven. It may be that there were others in the "denominations" that may be believers but they were few. Of course I found out later that they were the vast majority. I've learned over time to look at what God is doing. How is He blessing these people? How is He working in this church? You suddenly realise that He's working in places where He's "not supposed to". Why, because God works according to His grace. He doesn't wait for perfection or even a certain standard. Why not? Because all have sinned and come short of His glory. By grace he acts in people's lives and we understood that from Mary's life last week.

By grace God works and Mary and Joseph had their eyes opened to get a glimpse of who their Son was before going back to their normal existence. Let's ask the Spirit to open up our lives to see what God is doing and bring Him glory rather than running with the pack.

- **We need to be about our Father's business**

Mary and Joseph expected Jesus to simply go into his father's occupation - a carpenter. But they hadn't bargained on the fact that He was growing in wisdom and knowledge in a way that others were not. Verse 40 (not read) says: *40 The child was growing, and was becoming strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.* Jesus was aware that His Father wasn't Joseph and had become spiritually aware that His business was going to be the Heavenly Father's and there He was in the Temple, listening and asking questions of the teachers of the law - and amazing them. Jesus' ministry may have started when He was about 30, but here He was at 12 understanding that He was destined for God's business. It was His first act as an official Jewish man.

We are the people of God. We were born again to dwell in the Father's house forever and be about our Father's business. Do our lives reflect that? Do we desire His presence? Do we desire to please Him; to obey Him?

But there's more than this. After this we read *51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.* He knew His Father's business, but until that day He was called which we are going to look at next time, He was subject to His mother and Father. We are all called to grow as believers. Maybe we know we are called of God to serve Him but we've not moved forward. Maybe you just need to be like Jesus and grow where you are. But you also need to be prepared for what God is going to do in your life.

Prayer