

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Luke's Gospel: The Lord's childhood (Luke 2:39-52)

Good morning and welcome to Truth for Today. The title of our current series is "Luke's Gospel", the title of our talk today is "The Lord's childhood". If you have a Bible please turn with me to Luke 2:39-52, this is where we read almost everything that the Bible has to say about the Lord's childhood.

"And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:39-52)

When studying the Bible we need to take into consideration every reference made of the particular subject along with the help of the Holy Spirit to understand fully its meaning. We can also look at history to help us to understand the world in Bible times. We can also sometimes presume things but we cannot be dogmatic about presumption. As I considered and prayed over this talk, I have come to the conclusion that when the Bible only gives a small insight into a subject, we must stick to the facts. Even more so when we are considering the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, Himself in His childhood.

The first fact we have is that the Child Jesus had godly parents. Luke 2:39 tells us that Joseph and Mary had done "*all things according to the law of the Lord*" (Luke 2:39); they were obedient to everything that the law demanded. They were devout Jews who observed Passover in Jerusalem every year. The Passover feast was a time of joy as all Israel remembered the time that Moses took them out from the bondage of Egypt under God's mighty hand (see Exodus 12).

Matthew 13:55 tells us that Joseph was a carpenter by trade. Joseph was a very wise and just man; he had to make many hard decisions in relation to his family. He was aware of the prompting of the Spirit of God and made the right decisions in God's will. Mary was also very wise, and as a mother she was aware of everything that Jesus did and said. It is said of her in reference to His words that "*she kept these things in her heart*" (Luke 2:51). Joseph and Mary had children of their own after Jesus was born, namely, Joses, Simon, Judas and some girls as well (see Matthew 13:55-56). Joseph and Mary lived a righteous life, both in what they said and what they did.

Parents today! Are you showing your children how to be godly and just? Is your desire that your children will faithfully serve the Lord? If so, we need to live godly, careful and consistent lives at all times to be a true witness to our children; We can never hide things from our children, our children know us best and can evaluate our lives. A good verse of encouragement to all parents who desire that their children would serve the Lord is Proverbs 22:6; "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*"

Joseph and Mary were well aware that Jesus was a special boy. He was, and is, the Son of God, and they both marvelled at what old Simeon said earlier in our chapter when he held Jesus in his arms (Luke 2:25-35). Joseph and Mary were both amazed as they dealt with Jesus throughout his childhood. Just one other point; what did Jesus do in the hidden years at Nazareth? I think it would be fair to presume that Jesus would have helped His earthly father in the carpenter's shed. He would have worked every day when He was old enough. He quietly lived and worked amongst men.

The next clear fact we have about the childhood of Jesus is in Luke 2:40: "*Jesus grew*". He developed physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. In fact, the first twelve years of our Lord's life is covered in this one verse. It conveys to us the fact that the ordinary development of mind and body, which is proper to mankind, marked Him - a testimony to His true Manhood. Have you ever considered that Jesus was born like you and me? He would have crawled like you and me; He had to learn to walk like you and me; He had to learn to speak like you and me, and His body developed like you and me. Because of this, the Lord Jesus can sympathize with us in every stage of our growth. However, we do always have to remember that in reference to the Lord Jesus although He was a man, He was God, yet He was without sin (see 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5).

Luke 2:40 also tells us that Jesus was "*strong in spirit and filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.*" God's favour and spiritual blessing was upon the Lord Jesus, just as it is upon you and me and every child of God. I wonder if Jesus went to school or was He taught at home? We are not told, but we are told that He was wise before His years. This is confirmed later in our passage when He converses with the learned doctors (Luke 2:46). Wisdom is the practical application of knowledge to problems in life. Usually it could be said of us that as we get older we get wiser, as we experienced life. It seems that the Lord Jesus increased in wisdom long before we ever do. The Lord Jesus also grew socially and spiritually as He walked in dependence on the Holy Spirit and in fellowship with God His Father. The Lord Jesus would no doubt spend time studying the Bible, our Old Testament, and spend time in prayer. He also took great delight in doing His Father's will. Just one thing of note here: the Lord Jesus does not seem to have done any miracles before He was thirty years old when He turned water into wine at the marriage in Cana (see John 2:1-12).

As we have seen, we know very little about our Lord's first twelve years, but we can presume that He was like every other child as far as those around were aware. He would play with His family and the local children. He would enjoy being with His father in the carpenter's shed. I often wonder if anyone who spent time with Him knew that He was different. He would always be good, never say anything bad or spiteful. He would be always kind and caring to others. The Bible does not tell us, but the wonderful nature of our Lord Jesus Christ would have been as evident as a child as when He was an adult. Our Lord Jesus learned humility and quietness like every normal child would. Joseph and Mary were well aware that Jesus was a very special boy, but they did not fully understand Him.

Deuteronomy 16:16 demanded that Jewish men to go up to Jerusalem to worship three times a year, but many could not afford to go so regularly. So everyone made the effort to go once a year at least to the feast of Passover. Luke 2:42-45 tell us that Jesus was taken by His parents to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. This was the first time that He had been taken. He was twelve years old, and He was ready to go because He was a very mature boy. It would seem that there were many families who travelled together for this special occasion. The women and children would lead the way with the men and young men following.

The children no doubt ran up and down through the crowds playing with their friends. The parents it seemed were happy to give the children freedom; they knew they were safe in such a vast company of friends. Everyone would look out for one and another's children. Joseph and Mary were no different to the other parents, but they discovered after a day's walking that Jesus was not among the company. They would have walked, probably run up and down the line of families asking if anyone had seen their son. They were very worried and distressed when they could not find Him so they turned back to search for Him in Jerusalem.

Only once have I had the experience of a child going missing and I will never forget it. It was in Chester Zoo, what a place to lose a child! We were at a conference and there was a big group of us on an outing with our children. My cousin's daughter went missing; you could imagine the panic! We ran everywhere looking for her and thankfully we eventually found her with some other adults; she had gone onto the train that takes you round about the zoo without even thinking!

There is a spiritual lesson we could learn here. Do we ever travel a day's journey without realising that Jesus is not in our company? It is quite a sobering thought that we can lose contact with the Lord Jesus because of unconfessed sin. Do we walk daily with the Lord Jesus at our side in happy fellowship? Let's try and keep the Lord Jesus close to us in every step of lives. It is also very interesting to note at this point that the Lord Jesus at twelve years old made a conscious divine decision that He would stay in Jerusalem. He was fully aware that He had work to do!

Luke 2:46-48 tell us of the search for the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a busy place; there were lots of people coming and going all the time. It is very interesting to note that it was after three days they found Him in the temple (Luke 2:46). This could be a reference to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a few years' time He was going to die, and be buried, and in three days He would rise again, in that very city of Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus was in the temple, the place of worship, the place where the word of God was read aloud. He was sitting among teachers, listening to them and asking questions (Luke 2:46). All who heard Him were astonished and amazed at His intelligence and understanding and answers (Luke 2:47). Joseph and Mary were also amazed, but they did not understand the Lord. They were not fully aware of the wisdom, and intelligence of their son and the purpose of His life

in this world. Joseph and Mary act as normal parents would. Mary lovingly rebukes the Lord Jesus and questions Him as to why He had done this (Luke 2:48). Mary tells Him of the distress and anxiety and quite possibly of the tears that were shed when they feared their son had gone missing forever.

In Luke 2:49-51 we read the first recorded words of our Lord Jesus and this give us a glimpse of the Lord as a young boy, fully aware of His identity as the Son of God and His awareness of the purpose of His divine mission in this world. He knew that He was to do the will of His heavenly Father who had sent Him into this world; in fact He loved to do His will. The Lord Jesus had work to do, work that Joseph and Mary were totally unaware of. He was to show His heavenly Father's love to mankind by giving up His life on the cross of Calvary.

The Lord Jesus rises from the midst of the teachers and goes back with His parents to Nazareth. Luke 2:51 is worthy of note; the Lord Jesus, even after showing His wisdom and understanding to others, was subject to His parents as He always had been. He was totally submissive and obedient to His earthly parents. This shows us clearly how humble the Lord Jesus was. The moral excellence of our Lord Jesus was seen here, as the Creator of the universe yet He took His place as an obedient child, subject to His parents in this humble Jewish family. Mary both spiritually and maternally was wise; she took in every word that the Lord Jesus had said and she kept them and cherished them in her heart.

Luke 2:52 tells us that the Lord Jesus grew physically and He increased in full understanding. Did He have to learn and understand more fully what His Father's work entailed? I think this verse would indicate that! I am reminded of Moses when God allows him to be brought up in Pharaoh's palace (Exodus 2:1-10), then He sends him into the backside of the desert (Exodus 2:11-25), and then He brings him out to lead His people out of Egypt. The early years of Moses and the time spent in the relative isolation of the desert were in preparation for what God wanted him to do. The first thirty years in the life of the Lord Jesus on this earth were in relative obscurity. Could we say that during these years that the Lord was being prepared by the Father so He was ready for the mighty work He was about to do? Abraham and Isaac also come to mind when, as father and son, they go together to the place of sacrifice (see Genesis 22:19). The trust between them is quite evident and the bond between them is clear to see. Abraham is prepared to give his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God. Isaac is fully obedient to his father, Abraham. Isaac trusts him in all things, even when he tied him to the altar and raised a knife to kill him (Genesis 22:10). God in this instance provided a substitute for Isaac, a ram caught by its horns (Genesis 22:13). God the Father and God the Son walked together step by step through this world all the way to the cross of Calvary. But there would be no substitute there for our blessed Lord Jesus. God's wrath would be poured on Him on account of our sin, and the Lord Jesus willingly took our place on the cross.

The Lord Jesus did everything to the joy and delight of His father. God was very pleased with His Son, and eighteen years later when Jesus emerged from Nazareth, the Father was able to say of Him, *"Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased"* (Luke 3:22). Does the Father find His pleasure in us as children of God?

There is another important lesson for us here! The importance of preparation, training, patience and the value of common work in our spiritual childhood. In fact this is a good lesson for Christians of all ages as they desire to serve the Lord. We need to be thorough in our preparation before we do something for the Lord, spending time in careful study and quiet meditation before the Lord. The Lord deserves our very, very best effort! How many of us take much more time preparing for things at work than we do in the service of our Lord?

The Lord Jesus is a wonderful example for all young people to follow. He grew in a balanced way without neglecting any part of His life, and His priority was always to do the will of His Father. He knew how to listen and how to ask the right questions. He learned how to work, and He was obedient to His parents.

It is also interesting to note that people liked the Lord Jesus when He was young, *"He found favour with God and man"* (Luke 2:52). As He grew up in Nazareth, He was obviously a very popular and well behaved boy. Everybody likes a child who has good manners, never speaks back, is always obedient and respects others. The Lord Jesus was absolutely perfect in every aspect of His childhood. As the Lord Jesus embarked on His public ministry His popularity soon dropped and He was soon hated and rejected by the many. But there were always those who loved the Lord Jesus as He fulfilled the work that He had stepped into the world to do.

As we have considered the early life of the Lord Jesus this morning, may more of His character be seen in us!

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