

Luke #4: Jesus' Boyhood

Luke 2:39-52; Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-23

I. The Courage of Joseph

Joseph was the man to whom God entrusted the task of protecting the mother and her child from the time she conceived Jesus.

A. **Matthew 1:18-25: Joseph courageously restrained his anger and chose to treat Mary with mercy and love. (love covers a multitude of sins)**

- Have you ever wondered how Joseph really felt when he found out that Mary was pregnant with a child he knew was not his? She had to have been unfaithful to him with another man. She was an adulteress!
- From "The Forgotten Man," by Dene Ward:

Joseph thought he had chosen well, a young lady--very young by our standards-- from a good family, also in the lineage of David. The year of betrothal had begun, and suddenly his world turned upside down. His wife, for so his fiancée was called, though they as yet were not married, had turned up pregnant, at least three months by the time he found out. Now what? He was a kind man who would not shame her, so he was ready to seek a quiet divorce (1:19), the only way to end a betrothal. But God sent the angel Gabriel to reassure him. Mary was not lying, she was not hallucinating. She really was pregnant, but not by another man. She had not been unfaithful to him. God was the father of this unborn child, and he was putting that child's safety and well-being into the hands of Joseph.

So Joseph was faced with this horrible shame for the rest of his life. Either people would think he had no self-control, that he and Mary had committed fornication as many were still saying thirty-three years later (John 8:41), or they would think he was too weak to put her away.

Joseph could have been consumed with pride in either case and simply said no, but he didn't. He took Mary as his wife.

Almost immediately he found himself in danger of King Herod, a cruel and ruthless man who had no problem killing his own sons, much less someone else's. Joseph found himself fleeing to a land several hundred miles distant to save the life of a child that not only delayed his marriage but put his own life in danger, a child that was not even his. Yet he fulfilled his duty to protect and provide, finally returning to his home town Nazareth, where all the gossips lived, and working his whole life to provide food, clothing, and shelter, and teaching this child a trade, just as if he were his own. Somehow he managed to overlook the problems this woman had caused him, and raised a large family with her, at least four more sons and uncounted daughters (Mark 6:3).

Women are told that men have fragile egos, that wives should be careful of the things they say and do, things that might make him feel less a man. No one watched out for Joseph's ego. He took it all, evidently without a word, simply because he was a righteous man who lived by faith. He fulfilled his duty, never expecting and never receiving any glory in this life. He took care of a child who changed the world. He kept him safe, and helped raise him to be able to fulfill his own duty, one even harder than Joseph's.

B. **Joseph humbly and courageously obeyed God, ignoring societal pressure, and took Mary to be his wife.**

- As Mary's pregnancy became obvious to people in their small town, Joseph knew that he

would be publicly embarrassed. The society he lived in expected him to express outrage and to punish Mary by divorcing her and shaming her. But because of his strength of character he decided to divorce her privately and protect her from public disgrace.

- Joseph's faith in God enabled him to overcome the stigma of becoming the husband of Mary, and to accept responsibility for a child who was not his.
- Although he had the legitimate right to it, he did not have sexual relations with Mary until after Jesus was born (the virgin bore a child). We tend to treat our sexual urges as if they have some kind of overwhelming power. But, for the higher purposes of God, Joseph was able to restrain himself.

C. Joseph sacrificially provided for and protected Jesus when his life was in danger. (Matt 2:1-23)

- Joseph's courage was tested again after the child was about two years of age. Wise men from the East had visited the family and had worshipped Jesus! The night after their visit, Joseph was again visited by an angel who commanded him to take the child and flee to Egypt for Herod was seeking to kill him.
- This meant months of dangerous travel over hostile terrain. But God knew that Joseph was courageous enough and strong to handle the task.

D. Applications:

- The world needs honorable and courageous male leadership with strong godly character.
- Wives need courageous husbands to love and protect them, even at great personal cost.
- Children need fathers who are morally courageous enough to protect them against the hostile world.

II. The Son of God at 12 Years Old

Jesus grows and is filled with wisdom by the Grace of God (2:39-40)

Verses 39-40: When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

- If Jesus is God, how can he increase in wisdom, as verse 52 says he does?

Luke 2:52 (ESV) ⁵² *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*

It helps us understand Philippians 2:6-7, "Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but *emptied himself*, taking the form of a servant..."

By placing Himself under the authority of His Father, just as all human beings are under God's authority, Jesus willingly emptied himself of all divine power. He exercised only that power which was granted to Him by His Father. For example, He said concerning the time of his return (Matthew 24:36), "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven *nor the Son*, but the Father only."

Jesus at age 12, on the annual trip to Jerusalem for the Passover (2:41-50)

Verse 41: Now his parents went up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

- Luke doesn't mention the trip to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod the Great against

Jesus (Matthew 2:13-23). Rather, Luke focuses on Jesus' growth to maturity in Nazareth.

- Luke stresses how devout and law-abiding Jesus' parents were. We saw in 2:22, 23, 24, and 39 how Mary and Joseph did all that the Mosaic law required.
- By stressing this, Luke tries to show Theophilus Jesus wasn't killed by Jewish teachers because he was a lawbreaker of the Jewish faith. His parents were devoted to the law of Moses. They loved it, studied it, and obeyed it.

Verse 42: *And when he was 12 years old they went up according to the custom.*

- The 12th year was the final year of preparation for a lad before he entered full participation in the religious life of the synagogue. Up until that time his parents, especially his father, were teaching him the commandments of the law, but at the end of the 12th year the child goes through a ceremony by which he formally takes on the yoke of the law and becomes a *bar mitzvah* "son of the commandment."

Verses 43, 44: *And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey.*

- Travelers to the feast in Jerusalem usually traveled in a large caravan, since a person traveling by himself was in danger from bandits.
- Two things stand out here. First, is the implicit trust Mary and Joseph have in their 12 year old son. If he had been an irresponsible child, his parents would never have gone a whole day without knowing his whereabouts. They trusted him and knew he had good judgment.
- Second, there is the apparent disregard Jesus had for his parents' time and feelings. However, it appears that he intentionally let them go in order to show them his priorities from that time forward.

Verses 43–46: *They sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple.*

- Was it three days searching in Jerusalem, or three days since leaving Jerusalem (one out, one back, and one in search)? Likely the latter.

Verses 46, 47: *They found him in the temple sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.*

- In the course of the discussion, this intense boy of twelve was listening and asking probing, insightful questions that indicated to all his depth of understanding.
- He sought out teachers, sat in their midst, listened, asked questions, gave answers

Verses 48–50: *And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold your father and I have been looking for you anxiously (literally: in pain)." And he said to them: "Why is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house (or about his business)." And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them.*

- "in my Father's house" or "about my Father's business"? Either translation is possible. Literally, "in the things of my Father." Pronoun, must supply the noun.
- The main point of the whole passage probably lies in the contrast between "your father and I" and "my father."

- Jesus has chosen this crucial stage in his life to tell his parents that he knows who he is and what his mission is. His mission will require a devotion to God's purposes so great that it takes precedence over the closest family ties.

Jesus obeys his parents, increases in every aspect of life (2:51-52)

Verse 51a: *Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.*

- Jesus was learning obedience on a daily basis.
- He must wait, learn, grow, and prepare himself for that time when he will enter into his ministry.

Verse 51b: *But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.*

Mary has been trying to make sense of what she is seeing in her son. Gabriel's announcement, Elizabeth's and Zechariah's prophecies, the shepherds' story of an angelic declaration of his birth, Simeon's and Anna's words and blessing in the temple, and this incident in the temple when Jesus is twelve. Her boy calls God his Father and means it literally? Mary cannot take all this in. But she treasures these moments and ponders them in her heart.

Verse 52: *And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

- Jesus is "filled with wisdom" (2:40), and yet he still grows in wisdom (2:52).
- This passage covers the next two decades from age twelve until he is about 30 years of age and enters upon his public ministry.
- WISDOM: Jesus learned from the Scriptures and from his mother, in groups and in solitude, and he increased in wisdom by carefully observing everyday life and how to navigate God's world.
- STATURE: "Jesus did not simply emerge from the wilderness preaching the kingdom. He learned to crawl, walk and talk. He scraped his knees. Perhaps he broke a finger or wrist. He fought off the common cold, suffered through sick days, and navigated his way in the awkwardness of adolescence. He learned social graces and worked as a common laborer in relative obscurity more than half his earthly life." (J. Piper)

From the **Infancy Gospel of Thomas** (2nd century):

When this boy Jesus was five years old he was playing at the ford of a brook, and he gathered together into pools the water that flowed by, and made it at once clean, and commanded it by his word alone. But the son of Annas the scribe was standing there with Joseph; and he took a branch of a willow and (with it) dispersed the water which Jesus had gathered together. When Jesus saw what he had done, he was enraged and said to him: "You insolent, godless dunderhead, what harm did the pools and the water do to you? See, now you also shall wither like a tree and shall bear neither leaves nor root nor fruit." And immediately that lad withered up completely; and Jesus departed and went into Joseph's house. But the parents of him that was withered took him away, bewailing his youth, and brought him to Joseph and reproached him: "What a child you have who does such things." After this again he went through the village, and a lad ran and knocked against his shoulder. Jesus was exasperated and said to him: "You shall not go further on your way," and the child immediately fell down and died. But some, who saw what took place, said: "From where does this child spring, since every word is an accomplished deed?"

Another example, this time from the **Arabic Infancy Gospel**:

One day, when Jesus was running about and playing with some children, he passed by the workshop of a dyer called Salem. They had in the workshop many cloths which he had to dye. The Lord Jesus went into the dyer's workshop, took all these cloths, and put them into a cauldron full of indigo. When Salem came and saw that the cloths were spoiled, he began to cry aloud and asked the Lord Jesus, saying: "What have you done to me, son of Mary? You have ruined my reputation in the eyes of all the people of the city; for everyone orders a suitable colour for himself, but you have come and spoiled everything." And the Lord Jesus replied: "I will change for you the colour of any cloth which you wish to be changed"; and he immediately began to take the cloths out of the cauldron, each of them dyed as the dyer wished, until he had taken them all out. When the Jews saw this miracle and wonder, they praised God.

After such dramatic stories, the account in **Luke 2:41–52** seems a bit dull—and that is precisely what speaks in favor of its authenticity. The most likely source for the story is Mary.