

## About His Father's Business

Luke 2:40-52

Is it just me, or does Jesus come across as a bit sassy in these verses? Maybe it's just the teacher in me, but it's very easy to sympathize with how exasperated Joseph and Mary must have been. After all, they had been searching for Jesus for days. And they had to have been worried sick, wondering what could have happened to a small-town boy from Nazareth in a big city like Jerusalem. And yet, when they finally found Him, He acted as if there was nothing wrong or even anything exceptional about His behavior. Yes, we could easily imagine Mary saying the ancient Israelite equivalent of, "Go cut me a switch, young man!"

But at this point, our feelings run headlong into our theology. For we know what the angels said to the shepherds on the day that Jesus was born: He is not only the Christ, the Lord's Messiah, but the Lord Himself. Yes, Jesus is God. Moreover, we know what John the Baptist said about Him: that He is the sinless, spotless Lamb Who never did anything wrong. And we know that God's Law includes this commandment: "Honor your Father and your Mother." And if all of that is true, then it just wasn't possible for Jesus to sass His momma. So when Luke tells us that Jesus continued in subjection to His parents, we know that accurately describes the whole character of Jesus' life as a child.

So, if Jesus wasn't talking back to His mama, doesn't that mean that Mary and Joseph were actually wrong to scold Him? In spite of all our inclinations, could it be that the parents in this story actually owed an apology to the child?

Strange as it may seem, the answer is actually "yes." And it turns out that the parent/child relationship is at the root of Mary's first mistake. For notice what she says to Jesus in verse 48: "Your father and I have been searching for you." Now, while that statement accurately describes her and Joseph's actions, it also reveals something important about Mary's attitude: her insistence on maintaining her role as mother, as protector.

Now, to a certain extent she was absolutely right to feel this way, for Jesus wasn't quite of age yet. You see, in Jewish society, a boy is considered "bar mitzvah," or a "son of the commandment," at age 13. And so Mary naturally thought she needed to keep those apron strings tied tightly to her twelve-year-old son, no matter how precocious he might have been.

But however easy it is for us to understand her attitude, her view of Jesus as nothing more than her boy was nevertheless her first significant error. For, to put it simply, Mary forgot Who Jesus really is.

Now yes, she was in fact the mother of Jesus. But at the same time, Mary knew that Jesus was much more than that. For even though she called Joseph Jesus' father, deep down in her heart, she should have remembered that wasn't technically true. For she remembered what the angel Gabriel had said to her back in chapter 1 of Luke's gospel: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Yes, Mary knew that Jesus' Father is really none other than God Almighty. And Mary also knew what we can read just a few verses before this passage, the things the prophet Simeon had said at the time she and Joseph first brought Jesus to the Temple: that Jesus would be the salvation of Israel, and a light to reveal the glory of God even to the Gentiles. Oh, no, Jesus wasn't just a normal twelve-year-old boy, lost in the streets of Jerusalem: God Almighty had a big job for Him to do, and so there was no way God would have let anything happen to Him. And so we can see Mary's big mistake: in her understandable panic, she forgot Who Jesus really is.

But I think we often make a similar error. For even though we know that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the World, aren't we too often confused about Who He is with respect to us? More precisely, don't we often find ourselves assuming that we are the ones in charge of our relationship with Him?

For how many of us have heard the gospel proclaimed like this? "Jesus stands outside the door of your heart. Won't you let Him in?" We thus imagine that we have a free choice, either to admit Jesus or to deny Him entrance. We thus cast Jesus in the role of a beggar or a penitent, helpless to act unless we take the initiative, impotent unless we make the right choice.

But if that's what we think then, like Mary, our problem is that we have forgotten Who Jesus is. For Jesus is not a helpless little boy, waiting around for us to decide whether to make Him our Lord. No, regardless of any of our

opinions to the contrary, the fact is that Jesus is our Lord and King, our Master and our Maker. Yes, He may stand outside the door of the hearts of men, but his knock is that of the owner of the house, demanding entrance of His servant. No, the Lord Jesus admits no rival to His royal authority, and He will brook no opposition to His sovereign power.

So, if you have not confessed Him as Your Savior and Lord, if you imagine that you have the right to keep Jesus standing outside of your heart and life, be assured of this: He will not wait forever. For one day, when He comes again, every knee will bow in His presence. And on that great Day, He will take possession of what belongs to Him: everything and everyone that inhabits the entire universe. No, on that day, He will not knock. On that day, He will simply enter and claim what is His own.

But those of us who have confessed Jesus to be our Lord need to remember that fact: He is our Lord. It's not just the elders and deacons of the church who owe Him their service as we saw them promise to do last week – we all do. All who call ourselves Christians, all who claim His name owe our sovereign King all that we are and all that we have.

Yes, we owe Him all our allegiance, not just in the commandments that we find convenient or comfortable, but in every movement of our minds and every working of our wills. We owe Him all of our love: the love that springs from every part of our heart and soul and mind and strength. Oh no, none of us must ever forget Who Jesus is.

But Mary and Joseph didn't just forget Who Jesus is. They also forgot what He came to do. For only that could explain their anxiety as they searched frantically through the streets. Only that could explain the amount of time it took them to find Him.

For to put it simply, Mary and Joseph must have assumed that Jesus would be found doing typically boyish things. So perhaps they looked for Him in the marketplace, thinking that like any other perpetually hungry twelve-year-old, He would be hanging around the stalls of the bakers or the greengrocers begging for a snack. Or perhaps they interviewed some of the children playing in the streets, thinking that Jesus might have sought out their company for fun and games.

But, as Jesus points out, if they had only remembered what the angels told the shepherds, and what Gabriel and Simeon had said to Mary, if they had only remembered that He was no ordinary boy, none of their searching would have been necessary. No, Mary and Joseph would have found Him right away if they had remembered that He was born for a special, divine purpose.

For what else had Gabriel said to Mary, so many years before? "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). So, why should Jesus be found anywhere except in the temple? For didn't the prophet Malachi say, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple?" Isn't that where anyone would expect the Son of God, the Lord's Messiah to be found?

No, Jesus absolutely did the right thing: He waited where His parents would be sure to find Him. But just as Joseph and Mary simply forgot Who Jesus was, they also forgot what He had come to do. And so they worried and so they searched for Him needlessly.

Again, I don't think we are so very different. Sure, we have a clearer picture of what Jesus came to do than Joseph and Mary did. Because we've read the rest of the story, we know that He came to die on the cross for our sins. In fact, we know just how painful Jesus' mission of salvation would be for His mother Mary. For what else had Simeon said to her? "This Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed – and a sword will pierce even your own soul" (Luke 2:34-35).

But like Mary, don't we tend to forget how unimportant worldly things like food and games were to Jesus, at least when compared to the great spiritual mission He came to accomplish? For think about it. Most of the time, don't we find ourselves praying for things like health and safety and peace? Don't we long mostly for things like happiness and fulfillment and joy? In other words, aren't we mainly interested in Jesus helping us with our earthly problems? Don't we also tend to look for Jesus in the marketplace or on the playground?

But what was Jesus' real purpose? Sure, He came that we might have abundant life, but He didn't define that the way we usually do. Sure, Jesus answers many of our earth-bound prayers because He loves us. But that's not His top priority.

No, while we tend to be more concerned about our happiness, Jesus is much more concerned about our holiness. While we want to be satisfied, Jesus wants us to be sinless. While we are passionate about our pleasure, Jesus is passionate about our purity. And we have to admit that, even in our best moments, our devotion is so often focused more on our spiritual needs – on our redemption and our salvation – and not on God being able to glorify Himself in us.

And so if we need to remember that Jesus is our sovereign Lord and King, we also need to remember that His main purpose in coming to earth was to make us holy. His burning desire is for His bride, the Church, to be pure and spotless. For He came to save us not only from the punishment due to our sins, but from sin itself.

And so no, Jesus wasn't just Mary's boy: He was God's only Son. And He didn't come to the marketplace to buy things for us: He came to the Temple to be offered as a sacrifice on our behalf. In short, He came to be in His Father's house and about His Father's business.

And because He is Who He is, He commands us to obey Him and to submit to Him. And because He came to do what He did, He has set us free, enabling us to give our lives as completely to Him as Mary did when she said, "Be it unto me according to your word." So, don't we owe Him all we are and all we have? And could our sovereign Lord and our crucified Savior deserve anything less than for all of us to be about our Father's business?