

Jesus as a Boy
TEACHER & CONFOUNDER OF ALL

January 27, 2008

BIBLE VERSES

OT Lesson: 1 Samuel 2:26 (NRSV)

²⁶ Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people.

NT Lesson: Luke 2:41 - 52 (NRSV)

⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹ He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

OVERVIEW

In back-to-back stories, Luke tells of Jesus starting and ending his childhood (from birth to twelve years) in the Temple at Jerusalem. First, Jesus is presented at the temple when he was 8 days old for circumcision (see Jan 13th), and today's story has Jesus teaching the rabbis.

Luke starts both stories the same way: Jesus' parents were raising him to love, obey, and worship God, and to follow the Jewish laws and traditions. For Luke how Jesus was raised impacted how he grew and who he was. Our trust and honoring of God in our lives has an impact on our children. We learn from example: too well we know that parents who abuse most likely were abused children themselves, and their children will most likely be abusers. Parents who model love and respect for each other, and for their children, and who set boundaries that demonstrate this love are

more likely to have children who in turn develop healthy relationships throughout their lives. The same holds true for how we model our faith in God. If we only pay God minimal service on Sunday mornings, but live very differently the rest of the day and week, we directly teach our children that God only cares about what we say, not about who we are or what we do: after all, we are forgiven sinners, right? What does it matter? We teach that God can be duped by our words, and that our actions are to be dictated by our wants. However, God is never fooled by our deceptions; God knows our heart and what/who really is our God. Our children know it, too.

Luke also ends both stories the same way: Jesus grew strong, increased in wisdom and years, and gained human and God's favor. These phrases echo the story of Hannah and her son Samuel (see the Nov 4th handout). Hannah brought her son Samuel to the temple as an infant and dedicated his life to God. Samuel was raised with the priests, in God's presence, and taught to worship and serve God. Samuel was heard a voice incessantly calling his name one night. It was Eli the priest who finally understood that the voice was God's. Samuel followed Eli's instructions, and when God called a 3rd time, Samuel said, "Here I Am, Lord – what do you want me to do?"

Samuel's faith always rested with God, and it affected Samuel's life and the people around him. Multiple times in Samuel's story the writer inserts: *Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.* Ultimately, Samuel was called on by God to be God's last judge, the last person chosen to by God to speak God's word to the people – words of warning when they were straying, words of encouragement and hope during adversity. However, the people saw their neighbors had military men to fight for them in battle, which seemed to them more effective visually than praying to an unseen God. They demanded God allow them to have a king. Ultimately, God acquiesced; after warning them of the abuses a human king would bring them, God had Samuel anoint first Saul and then David as king of God's people.

By tying Jesus' childhood back to Samuel's Luke teaches us that God reverses the plot with Jesus: God anoints God's final King – but a king of God's choosing, not humans. God chose the time, the mother, and the circumstances: to be born king to a peasant girl from a people currently lorded over by the most powerful rulers in the world: first Greece then Rome. God doesn't require military might or statue to be Creator of the Universe; God simply is. God's King would also be God's ultimate judge for eternity: God's Word that convicts us as sinners, calls us to repentance, and redeems us of our sins. God's Word that becomes our Rock when life turns upside down, and God's Words of love and encouragement as we trust God for our sustenance.

In the middle of both stories, who Jesus *is* manages to confound and amaze all around him, including his parents. Jesus must have been an interesting child to have in your house. Luke does say that Jesus was obedient to his parents – possibly they wondered about their great luck at having such a great kid! Little did they understand the obedient child was the same God they actually worshiped. They got a taste of this in today's lesson. After three days of searching for their "obedient" 12 year old, who left them while they were heading home, they find him in the Temple teaching the rabbis. Jesus then gently upbraids them for worrying: why didn't you know I'd be in my Father's house? Mary & Joseph's reaction echoes our thoughts: Huh?? Ok, Son, not quite sure what you mean, but come on, time to get moving. Luke also reverses Samuel's question. Where Samuel was responding to God, "Here I am, what do you want of me?", Jesus was responding back to his parents, "Well, of course I am here, where else would you expect me to be?" God is now fully in control both in heaven and on earth – no intermediary is necessary.

God's ways are not our ways, and God came as Jesus to be the One Way, Truth, and Light, to bring us back to God (John 14:6). God calls us to stop trying to understand, but like a child to intrinsically trust and follow the example of the young boy/man, who was both obedient to his human

parents and fully connected and obedient to God his Father, and who allowed us to kill him for our sake because we can never fully understand or trust God. God's paradox in Christ becomes complete with the empty tomb on Easter: Only through trust in God's Way, and letting go of our own understandings and human conventions, do we end up 100% reconciled to God.

A PRAYER for This Week

God, we don't always get you, but we pray for faith to trust you only. Clear our minds and our hearts to hear your voice calling us to your Way. In Christ's name and only by your Holy Spirit we pray, Amen.

Activities & Questions to Ponder

Create space and time when family faith dialogue can develop and flourish.

The activities suggested below are to foster faith activities at home, and to help reinforce the week's lesson.

- ✦ How do you as a family worship God? Talk together and discover the ways you currently do, and the ways you can add, to worship God together each week. Maybe it's attending church together; maybe it's praying together for needs of those around you, and for your family and church; maybe it's volunteering together within the community to help others.

- ✦ Write family prayers to say at mealtimes. Writing helps your children to develop their thoughts,, and using a simple structure helps with focus: (1) Address God with words of praise; (2) Thank God for specific things God has done for your family, community, world, and for providing food for the table; (3) Ask God to bless the food, and to bless all those who helped the food come to your table; (4) Pray in Jesus' name and by the Holy Spirit; (5) Amen (Let it be so!).

- ✦ If you were to hear a voice calling your name at night, and no one was around, what would you think? Who would you tell? What or who is God using to call you right now?

- ✦ How has God called you to be a minister to others in this world? In other words, what unique set of skills has God given you? How can you best use these skills for others?

- ✦ Do you find it easy or hard to trust God in your job or at school? How do you apply Christian ethics in your work, and in how you relate to and talk about others? Do you look for ways to be God's emissary to others? Do you always speak well of others? Do you always work to do what is pleasing to God, or to humans? Do you pray for your co-workers each day – that God would forgive their sins and shower them with blessings?

Write down three ways that you would like God to help you in this area, and pray these requests each night.