

Sunday, January 2, 2022 | Reset

Week 1 | Luke 2:39-52 | “New Year New Mission”

Announcements:

We'll be having Bob's ordination on Sunday, January 30th, 2022. The examination will be on Saturday, January 29th.

New Year's Day often brings a clean slate to our routine. But as the weeks wear on, it's not uncommon to go from determined to deflated. The reasons for this vary, but, generally speaking, we get discouraged because we tend to rush headlong into a challenge unprepared. We fail to think through precisely what lies ahead. And so, when we encounter an obstacle, we quickly burn out.

"Rest" is a four-week series detailing how only through the power of the gospel can we truly start anew. After all, Jesus is our hope-bringer, our burden-taker, and our life-redeemer. He alone can push the reset and give us a fresh new start. And no matter how hard we may try, failure is unavoidable if we try to restart our lives on our own.

Today, we dive into Jesus' first recorded words on earth. Had I been well enough to speak last week, this message would've tied in neatly with our previous series, *Great Joy*, as we would've studied the passage right before this one. So, in an effort to root today's message in its context, here's a brief synopsis of what we would've covered last week:

Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the Temple to dedicate their firstborn to the Lord. While they were there, an elderly man named Simeon approached them and began to sing a song. His song comprised two parts: the first was a melody about God's ***salvation*** and the second was a tune about Mary's ***son***. In doing so, Simeon tied those two themes together. The promise of God's deliverance for all people—Jew and Gentile alike—and the baby boy that Mary held in her arms were one and the same. Jesus was and is God's way of rescuing all peoples.

Luke then moves the narrative forward in the chronology of Jesus' life by a measure of 12 years. And it is here we get a peculiar scene. Jesus' family was in Jerusalem for Passover. Afterward, everyone went home except Jesus. He slipped away and stayed in the Temple.

READ: Luke 2:39-52 (ESV)

³⁹ And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it,⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching 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 And when his parents 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 searching for you in great distress." ⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Now, often the blame for Jesus' being left behind is laid at the feet of his parents. But I'm quick to point out that Jesus and his parents went to Jerusalem "every year." And they weren't alone. They made the journey with friends and family. Considering that Mary and Joseph traveled in such a large entourage and in such a routine trip where nothing out of the ordinary was bound to happen, I think we can forgive them for losing track of Jesus. Especially considering that by ancient's standards, Jesus is on the cusp of adulthood.¹ For instance, while I know this sounds absurd to us, the promise of a thirteen-year-old held as much weight as a twenty-year-old.² Also, bear in mind, the average lifespan at this time was about half of what it was today. Statistically speaking, they were over the hill when they hit their 18th birthday. Meaning, it wasn't that Mary and Joseph failed to look after Jesus; it was that Jesus was "old enough" to look after himself.

¹ Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 1994), p. 259.

² Bock (1994), p. 264.

Now, I want you to notice **three** things.

i. The Plot's timeline. (vs. 41-46)

From beginning to end, the search for Jesus took **five** days. It was a day before Mary and Joseph realized that Jesus wasn't with them. It's possible they noticed his absence when he didn't come to their tent that night to sleep.³ Presumably, it then took at least another day for them to return to Jerusalem and begin searching for him (vs. 45; i.e., day two). But, according to verses 46, it took another three days of searching before they finally found him. 1 day of travel towards Nazareth + 1 day of travel back to Jerusalem + 3 days of searching in Jerusalem = five days.

Bear in mind, while Jerusalem was one of the largest cities in this area at this time, one could've easily searched it within a day.⁴ There were only so many places a twelve-year-old boy would've been. And had Mary and Joseph realized that their son was really the Son of God, they would've gone straight to the Temple. The fact that they didn't find Jesus till the end of the third day explains why Mary was so exasperated. She hadn't seen her boy for nearly a week. What's more, it's a humble reminder that even those who should've known Jesus the best (i.e., Mary and Joseph) struggled to fully grasp his divine identity.

ii. The People's Astonishment. (vs. 47-48a)

Luke tells us that all who heard the boy Jesus were "amazed" which is the Greek term **ἐξίστημι** (*exístēmi*). *Exístēmi* means, literally, to throw something out of position. When used metaphorically, it indicates marvel, wonder, and surprise (cf. Mat. 12:23; Mar. 3:21; 6:51, etc.). It's sort of like when you encounter something entirely out of the ordinary and have a hard time fully comprehending it. And it wasn't just the religious people and those in the audience who were amazed, but even Jesus' parents were "astonished" when they finally found him. It seems everyone crowded in to hear what the boy genius had to say.

This intrigue surrounding Jesus is similar to the interest surrounding child prodigies.

<INSERT PICTURE> Famously, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the 18th-century composer, not only could play a sheet of music by the age of 4, but he also wrote his first opera by the time he was 11.⁵ <INSERT PICTURE> In 1962, Stevland Morris, a blind African

³ Bock (1994), p. 265.

⁴ Morris, Leon, *Luke*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 108.

⁵ Ross, Ailsa, "13 Facts About Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart," July 2, 2018, *Mental Floss*, <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/547532/facts-about-wolfgang-amadeus-mozart>, [accessed, January 2, 2022].

American twelve-year-old boy, burst onto the rhythm and blues scene, calling himself “Little Stevie Wonder.”⁶ <INSERT PICTURE> Bobby Fischer became the US Chess Champion two months shy of his 15th birthday in 1957.⁷

Interestingly, Luke only uses the Greek word **ἐξίστημι** (*exístēmi*) three times in his gospel: first, here, in our passage; then in Lu. 8:56, where Jesus raises a little girl from the dead; and, then, lastly, it pops up again with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Lu. 24:22. From beginning, middle, and end, wherever Jesus went, astonishment would follow.

iii. The Parent’s Compliant. (vs. 48b)

Perhaps Mary was the one who first told Luke of this event. If so, we cannot doubt the degree to which this whole ordeal would’ve been imprinted in the mind of this poor mother. Imagine how much emphasis she would’ve made to not how she felt during those three long days of searching for Jesus. Thus, we can imagine the mix of pain and relief in her voice when he finally found Jesus and said, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.”

The Greek word translated as “distress” in our passage is the term **ὀδυνάω** (*ah-doo-nah'-o*), and it is a word that expresses great pain or extreme mental anguish.⁸ For instance, this same term is used by the rich man in hell when he cried out to Abraham and begged that he “send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented (*ah-doo-nah'-o*) in this flame” (Lu. 16:24). It is used again when it describes how the people of Ephesus felt when Paul said that he would see them no more (cf. Ac. 20:38).

This is a question that implies that Jesus was in the wrong. Mary and Joseph thought that he had been reckless and even hurtful. And, as any mother would, Mary demanded an explanation. And so, Jesus gives her one.

READ: Luke 2:49 (ESV)

⁴⁹ And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”

⁶ Britannica, T, Editors of Encyclopaedia, “7 Famous Child Prodigies,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/list/7-famous-child-prodigies>, [accessed, January 2, 2022].

⁷ Wikipedia contributors, “Bobby Fischer,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bobby_Fischer&oldid=1062927777, [accessed January 2, 2022].

⁸ Bock (1994), p. 268.

Now, depending on the Bible translation you grew up with, this verse is different. For instance, the New King James Version reads...

READ: Luke 2:49 (NKJV)

49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

So, which is the correct one? Well, both, really. The ESV's rendering of this verse is a far more literal (i.e., one to one) translation. But the NKJV's rendering of this verse gets to the meaning behind Jesus' words. This means Jesus' words work on two levels: the spoken and the unspoken.

a. The spoken.

The first level is straightforward and unmistakable. Mary asked Jesus for an explanation about his disappearance. Essentially, her questioning can be summed up, "Why are you here, in the Temple, and not with us?" To this, Jesus' response is quite reasonable. When he said, "did you not know that I must be in my Father's house" he was gently chastising his own mother. In essence, Jesus told Mary, "Where else would I have been if not in my Father's house?" If we were to look for someone, where would we look first, if not someone's house? This is precisely Jesus' point. The Temple was the ***last*** place they looked for Jesus when it should've been their ***first***.

b. The unspoken.

But these are Jesus' ***first*** recorded words. Indeed, there must be something more here than a simple spatial explanation. And, as Luke indicates in verse 50, there is. The key to noticing the implicit message underlying Jesus' words is phrasing. Rather than say, "Did you not know that ***would*** be in my Father's house?" Jesus said, "***Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?***" Any time Jesus said he "must" do something, it was laden with implication. In Luke 4:43, Jesus said that he "must preach the good news of the kingdom of God...." In Luke 9:22, Jesus said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." In Luke 22:37, Jesus said that he must be "numbered with the transgressors."

You see, Jesus' response does not simply answer the question about his ***location***; it also answers the question about his ***vocation***. This is why there are two perfectly correct translations of this one verse. In the ESV's version, the translators emphasized his location,

whereas, in the NKJV's version, the translators emphasized Jesus' vocation. Yes, obviously, if Mary and Joseph really knew Christ's identity, the Temple would've been the first, not last, place they would've looked for him. But they did not understand the purpose of Jesus' coming. His entire life would involve his "Father's business."

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

A fresh start begins by **embracing** God's plan for your life.

While everyone, including his own mother, did not understand Jesus' purpose for coming, Jesus **never** doubted his purpose. He never once stepped away from his calling. He was the Son of God, and he would do what his Father wanted him to do.

The same ought to apply to us. If we want a fresh start to 2022, we must also be about our Father's business. It is difficult to express how liberating it is when one finally divorces themselves from their own importance and is consumed by God's import.

This applies at multiple levels:

- **The Parental Level**

By and large, the plans that parents have for their children are almost always good. But for Christian parents, it is essential to remember that God's plans for each child are always better. And while this may be difficult for some to hear, this means that God's mission may even override parental mandates.

Now, I'm quick to remind any kids reading this that you are NOT Jesus. Jesus had an awareness about himself at twelve that many will not have until they're thirty, and most will not have at all. So, no, I am not encouraging you to be disobedient or defiant. The child who obeys their parents will eventually find they're living a life they didn't know they wanted but are nevertheless glad that they live it. Familial guidance rescues a child from a multitude of heartaches. I am saying that your parent is not the ultimate authority in your life; God is. But, for the most part, those two powers agree with one another about what you should and shouldn't do.

Now that I've covered my bases let's go back to my original thought.

Mom and dad, parenting is as much about leading a child to do the things you want them to do as it is about teaching them to do things that God wants them to do. Thus, the aim of every parent is not to get their child to listen to their voice only, but it is also to get them to listen to the voice of God (cf. 1 Sam. 3:7-10). It is about showing them

their heavenly Father's business which has been at work since the beginning of time, and how to take their special place in His unique plans for their life. God's plans for our kids are always greater than our plans for our kids.

- **The Professional Level**

So many have consumed their lives trying to get up the corporate ladder. They fight and win their way to the top only to discover that it's lonely at the top. There has never been a more enticing but disappointing lure than wealth and prestige.

This is NOT to say that success in one's professional life is wrong. It is good that whatever we do, we do it with excellence, and, typically, excellence is rewarded with promotions. And, as long as we do what we do as a service to the Lord, it is a good thing (cf. Col. 3:17).

But what I am saying is the same thing that DL Moody said over two hundred years ago: "Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn't really matter."

- **The Personal Level**

One of the most destructive lives we are ever told is to follow your dreams. It is okay to have aspirations. It is okay to have goals. But it is not okay for those dreams, aspirations, and goals to **have** us. If anything other than God has a hold of our heart, that thing is an idol. We should never tell anyone, "follow your dreams;" instead, we ought to say, "follow God's dreams."

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Video Description

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TEXT: Luke 2:39-52

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Pastor’s manuscript can be found here: