

Sermon Series – God with Us

Luke 2:41-52 Taking care of God's business 03/01/21

What you were doing at 12 years old reveals a lot about you?

- At age 12 **Manasseh** became **14th king** of Judah. But he was in kahoots with the Assyrian king of the day as a lad, and his subsequent 55-year reign is remembered as the **most evil** of all Jewish monarchies in the Bible.
- At age 12, **Justin Bieber** came second in a local song contest singing Ne-Yo's hit, "So Sick". The young **YouTube sensation** became a global superstar and still considered “sick” today.
- On a more positive note, at age 12, long **before Greta Thunberg’s** campaigning, a girl called **Severn Cullis-Suzuki** addressed the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janerio, Brazil. The young woman told them they “must change their ways” to protect our environment. She went on to be a life-long activist for indigenous rights in Canada.



What you were doing at age 12 reveals a lot about you. (I myself was avoiding school homework and teaching myself pop songs on guitar when I was twelve years old – maybe that explains a lot **about me today!**)

Jesus at twelve – Luke 2:41-52

Fortunately, Luke’s Gospel tells us what **Jesus** of Nazareth **was doing at age 12**. In Luke 2:41 the scene is an **annual pilgrimage**. There was nothing particularly special about this yearly journey. Each year the **holy family trekked** more than 150km, from **Nazareth to Jerusalem**. They did so to participate in the great festival of the **Passover**.¹



¹ All Jewish males of the time were expected to fulfill a duty of religion of the day by attending the great Temple festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles each year. Passover (of the festival of unleavened

Luke's mention of Jesus' age tells his original readers that the boy was **one year away** from taking on his formal status as an adult in the culture of his time and his people (i.e. his Bar Mitzvah).

Luke 2:43 notes that the boy "Jesus **stayed behind** in Jerusalem...".

After what would have been **7 days of the great festival** Luke tells how Joseph and Mary and their large travelling cohort departed Jerusalem, but not till after a whole day's travel did they realize **Jesus was not among his siblings and cousins**.

I still remember that terrifying moment as a child when I **got separated** from my mum and dad at the Melbourne Show. Shaking in my boots I asked myself, "Have they **abandoned me?**" (I was 18 at the time 😊).



But in this story there's **no hint of negligent parenting** (see vss. 43,44,48).² Nor is Jesus **deliberately hiding himself**. Instead, the original text simply states a fact: **Jesus "remained"** in Jerusalem. When they searched for him, Mary and Joseph found Jesus in a most **unusual situation for a boy his age**. We read in **vss. 45-47...**

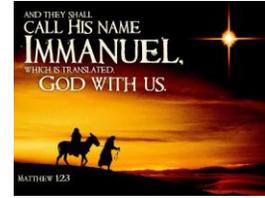
⁴⁵ When they couldn't find [Jesus], they went back to Jerusalem to search for him there. ⁴⁶ Three days later they finally discovered him in the Temple, sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions. "All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers."³

bread) was fundamental to Jewish identity, recalling the rescue of God's chosen ones from slavery in Egypt long ago Exod. 12:14-30

² In verses 43 and 44 we see that Mary and Joseph thought Jesus to be among the members of their extended family in the travelling cohort when they departed Jerusalem.

³ Later in the Gospels we read time and time again how the crowds listening to Jesus, as an adult rabbi, were "astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority" (e.g., Luke 4:32). Others would report how Jesus taught distinctively as one having authority, and not as the other scribes of those days did." (see Matthew 7:28-29).

Our sermon series has been unpacking the title “Immanuel” that was given to Jesus at his birth: It means **God is with us**.⁴



We’ve been looking at early accounts of his life that **confirm** what the Scriptures consistently proclaim:

- Jesus is **truly human**,
- he is **truly connected** to God’s long-prepared messianic plans, and
- his **origins** are also **truly divine**.

Other Jewish boys of Jesus’ age **followed in the footsteps** of their earthly fathers. But when Mary and Joseph finally found Jesus sitting among the biblical scholars and teachers, Jesus reminded them to whom he truly belonged. **In verse 49 we read...**



“Why were you searching for me?” he said to Mary and Joseph. “Did you not know that I must be in **my Father’s house**?”

He was born of Mary, yes. But as Luke’s nativity narratives revealed to us at Christmas, Jesus’ **origins** were also **from God**.⁵

Verse 49 can literally be translated, “Did you not know that I must be **about my Father’s business**?”

No ordinary Jewish person of the day would speak of God as **their personal “Heavenly Father”** as **Jesus did**.⁶ Luke is showing us that Jesus is not merely a godly child, he is what the Scriptures call, **The Son of God**.⁷

⁴ Matthew 1:23

⁵ Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1-14

⁶ This was especially true at Passover, celebrating a time when Israelites were first called God’s “first-born son” Exod. 4:22 Firstborn sons in Jewish families were inheritors of their father’s possessions and the metaphor’s cultural and theological significance (e.g., Exod. 13:2) points to the inheritance of God’s riches promised to faithful Israelites. The reference to “sons” does not necessitate hierarchy re gender.

⁷ E.g., 1 John 5:20. This is the first, but not the last reference of Jesus to God in such close personal terms in the Gospels E.g., Mk. 14:36

Taking care of God's business

What Jesus was doing **at age 12** reveals so much of **who he is** and **what his life's purpose was about**. Jesus the adult was **no Johnny-come-lately rabbi** appearing on the bible's scene for a brief **3-year miracle tour**. Instead, from his **earliest** earthly years:

- Jesus' **humanity** and **divinity** were **inseparable**,
- His **connectedness** to the messianic promises of Old Testament Prophets is **unmistakable**, and
- His **mission** as the agent of God's **salvation** for all is **without doubt** in the minds of the Gospel writers.

Jesus' M.O., if you like, is **to be where God is, and to be doing what God does**. He later describes himself in this way in John chapter 5, saying:

"Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise" (John 5:19)

My wife and I visited the Island of **Rhodes** a few years back. We stopped at a restaurant on the beautiful shore of the Mediterranean in the village of **Lindos**. The locals informed us that since the son had taken over management of the business it had **lost nothing** of its great **hospitality**, its extraordinary **generosity**, or its **quality** food. It was as if, they said, the **father** himself was **running the place**.⁸

What is the **family business Jesus was referring to in verse 49**? Surely he wasn't referring to carpentry in Nazareth, as honorable a trade as this might be. No, Jesus' **business** was that of His **Heavenly Father: bringing to the world, and all creation, God's saving love and grace**.

⁸ The point is not about patriarchy or gender in particular, instead, as in the modern Greek context in Rhodes the father/son cultural norm conveys the idea of intimacy and likeness, as in Luke's account, the language of "Heavenly Father" and "Son" conveys this truth to 1st century readers. Though language is limiting, it sufficiently informs us of a great mystery within the Godhead.

It comes as no surprise in the Gospel of Luke:

- The **angels** of Luke chapter 1 announced good news that babe at Bethlehem is the promised one from God— He is **Christ**, the Lord.
- **Simeon** and **Anna**, prophets of God, in Luke chapter 2, declared that him the means of God’s long-promised and prepared **salvation for all**.
- And here, Jesus’ **self-disclosure** points aligns him with later claims that He is **The Son of God, taking care of God’s business** on earth.

Don’t worry too much **what you were doing at age 12**. For, as Christians, **it is what Jesus was doing** at 12 years of age that matters! His life’s mission **shapes who we are** and **what we do** with our lives **now**. By his grace, we The Church, are now taking care of God’s business here on earth in the power of the Spirit. Our business is to **be about God’s business**.

In our communion service today we’ll be reminded what that business **looks like in action**. We’ll ask God again to help us to...

“**follow Jesus** in all we do and say, to work for **justice**, and to bring God’s **peace** to this world that God has made.”

Let’s be clear, in this time of **hope** and **resolutions**, just **who’s business** we are in and **what work** we are called to take part in as followers of Jesus.