

Text: Luke 2:36-52

Title: Early Life of Jesus

Truth: Anna and Jesus are models for our own spiritual life.

Date/Location: Sunday September 17, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

The birth narrative about Jesus ends with one more remarkable person giving testimony of the redemption coming through the Child, the family's travel back home, and a narration of one event during Jesus's youth. There are no fantastic stories, no super-human feats, just an unusually wise youth interacting with the Jerusalem teachers.

I. Luke 2:36-38, Anna's Prophecy

- A. Anna's name derives from Hannah (1 Samuel 1–2), which derives from the Hebrew for *grace* or *favor*. She was a prophetess in an era when God still gave that gift upon occasion. She may have predicted the future, or just proclaimed the truth of God's word to others with no supernatural element. She joined a few remarkable Bible women with this title: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Isaiah's wife, and later Philip's four daughters. She was very old by the standards of the day—84 years of age. She is exemplary because she was dedicated to serving God at His house with fasting and prayer all the time. Many would consider this very odd, but it is not. It is unusual because most people are concerned primarily about their own things.
- B. Anna walked into the vicinity when Simeon was holding the baby and giving his prophecy to Mary and Joseph. God thus blessed Anna in that she was able to see the Messiah with her own eyes—the Savior of the world for which she looked and then the one she described to all those who longed for redemption in Jerusalem. How I hope you long for God to similarly reward you by seeing the Messiah at the rapture of the church. The text tells us first that Anna gave thanks to God. Thank you, God, for sending the Logos to come as Jesus and be a faithful high priest, our Savior, our Lord, our rescuer.

- C. Simeon and Anna were two people in a group who were looking for redemption. That phrase marks off a certain kind of person who is different than other people. There are people looking for money and those looking for entertainment and peace and man-made solutions to the world's problems. There are those who are looking out for themselves, or to redeem themselves. But there is a certain kind of individual who is looking for redemption from God for humanity. Today, Christians are that kind of person.
- D. Anna presents us with a model of living and thinking. I asked us back in January if we are at all interested to be more like her. I challenge you to look at life more like she did—awaiting redemption, knowing and telling others about God's word, serving God diligently, giving thanks, being faithful into old age.

II. Luke 2:39-40, Early Years of Jesus

- A. Luke mentions in passing the travel of the parents *back* to Nazareth of Galilee, this time with a child, over the same territory they have gone some months earlier, at that time nearly 9 months pregnant.
- B. Jesus developed in many important ways in the subsequent years.
 1. He **grew**. That is easy enough, most of the time. On occasion growth does not happen normally due to an affliction of some sort—genetic or nutritional or something. This happens because of the curse on the world in which we live.
 2. He became **strong in spirit**. Although not all manuscripts have the phrase “in spirit,” it seems superfluous to me that Luke would mention he became strong in a physical sense, as that would come naturally with growth which he mentioned first. The strength of spirit is the point. See Luke 1:80 for a parallel in the life of John the Baptist. This quality is not confidence or good psychological adjustment. Rather, He had a firm grasp of matters beyond the mundane, in the things of God. He responded to situations by the Spirit, not with sin.
 3. He was **filled with wisdom**. With no sin to hinder and no foolishness to limit, what heights of wisdom the young boy Jesus could attain! This wisdom came through knowing God's word. John was similar, filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15).

4. **God's grace** was upon Him. This is once again like John the Baptist (Luke 1:66). The hand of the Lord was with the future baptizer, like God's grace was upon the young Jesus.

These characteristics, though not perfectly attainable by any child other than Jesus, are not entirely out of reach of our kids either. Let us pause right now and ask that the Lord will work these things in our children, and in ourselves as well.

III. Luke 2:41-52, Jesus at 12 Years of Age

- A. Luke describes events surrounding Jesus as a 12-year-old boy. The family would go to Jerusalem to worship every year as the Law instructed. On one of those trips, a simple miscommunication between parents and child led to Jesus being left behind in Jerusalem. The traveling group was likely large, and the women probably spoke with one another and the men with one another. Mom probably thought Dad had him, and vice versa. The young Man found a good place to hang out while he awaited His parents' return and talked with the teachers of the Law.
- B. In very short order—just a couple of days—he built a reputation as a legal scholar, understanding and answering questions that were very difficult. This shows not so much that He was using His divine faculties, but that He paid good attention to the Law, Writings, and Prophets in His studies at home, in the Nazareth synagogue, and in Jerusalem. He was a good student because that is what a believer in God does—he meditates in the Law day and night. He hides it in his heart. He treasures it more than fine gold. He lives by it. He listens to its wisdom and gains wisdom.
- C. His mother and father were very concerned about his well-being. Their anxiety is understandable but note: God tells us not to be anxious, even about things we think are legitimate causes for anxiety! Not to worry—if history was any indicator, God the Father knew just how to protect this special young man. The parents found Him but did not understand his saying that He was occupied with His Father's business (not Joseph's business!). Imagine what the parents were thinking or what they said the next year!

- D. The account shows that He knew from an early age why he was here—to be doing His Heavenly Father’s work. He said something like this: “In the things of my Father it is necessary for me to be.” Some translations suggest Jesus was saying it was necessary for him to be in His Father’s house; others “about My Father’s business.” The difference is not enough to get worked up about, although most of the time Jesus spent *away* from the Jerusalem temple, but still doing His Father’s business. Wherever He was, He was doing His Father’s bidding. Sometimes we speak about being engrossed “in the things of God.” He was definitely that.
- E. Lest we think that Jesus was a bit of a rebel against his parents, the text clarifies that He went down (from Jerusalem’s elevation) to Nazareth and was obedient to them during his teenage years. That is a miracle! Seriously: the son of God was obedient to others!?
- F. Luke augments the list in 2:39-40. As Jesus continues into his teen years, he grew in physical size and wisdom. He also had a good reputation before God and people. May our children also increase in favor with God and people.
- G. Verse 51 says that his mom kept all these things in her heart. She saw the behavior of her Son; she saw His wisdom; she saw how others responded to Him. These were things held close to her heart. She put them into long-term storage. She paid attention to them. She mulled them over and what they might mean for the near- and far-terms. She cared about them. She did not just let them pass by her eyes or “in one ear out the other.”

Conclusion

A major way to apply what we learn here is to strive to raise our children so that they are concerned about the things of God and that they experience God’s grace, wisdom, and a strong, discerning spirit. We need to be diligent to figure out how to build an environment where we cultivate this kind of young person. For one thing, we must be people who are concerned about the things of God and are serious about God’s grace and wisdom and discernment. We cannot cultivate that which we know nothing about!

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