

In My Father's House

Introduction

The Text

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

⁴¹Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴but 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, ⁴⁵and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸And 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." ⁴⁹And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. ⁵¹And 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.

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:39–52)

The Christologies of John and Luke

- A. It is quite intriguing to compare the Christology presented by Luke here with that presented by John in his gospel.
 1. In the gospel of John, the accent is immediately put upon the divinity of the Son. The movement is from the top down, from heaven to earth.
 - a. Hence: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh..." (Joh 1:1, 14a).
 - i. There's no birth narrative, no childhood narrative. It's just this: God came down. And John takes us from there immediately into His adult ministry.
 2. How different when we come now to consider Luke's presentation of the Christ! For here the accent is not quite as much on the divinity of the Son, but on His humanity. The movement is not so much from the top down but from the bottom up—there's a grass-roots development of the Christ of God.

- a. First He is a promise on the lips of Gabriel; then He is a fetus in the womb of Mary; then He is a newborn in an animal trough; then He is an infant being circumcised and dedicated to YHWH; then He is a youth sitting in His Father’s house; then, finally, He is man, ministering among the lost sheep of Israel.
 - i. While the divinity of the Son is not in any way repressed, it is presented to us in the context of His developing humanity.

The Frame and Its Guiding Idea

- A. I begin this way because, it seems to me, the main point of our passage this morning is just this: The Christ of God is on the rise.
 - 1. He is growing, developing, preparing for His office as Messiah—the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King of Israel and, through Israel, of the world.
- B. I came to this conclusion because of the way our text is framed. I wonder if you caught it. There are two summary statements put at the beginning and end of our text (vv. 40, 52). Bringing the two together provides the guiding idea for all that comes in between, and will serve as the compass for our time together this morning.
 - 1. V. 40 reads: “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.” Already you can sense the development of Jesus as a human being.
 - 2. But lest we miss Luke’s focus on this, he repeats it again in v. 52 with even greater emphasis: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” There is an increase taking place here—in wisdom, in stature, and in favor. The Christ of God is on the rise.

The Surprising Way of Increase

- A. Within this literary frame we are given a narrative that supports its main point.
 - 1. But, as we follow the narrative closely, something surprising comes into view. It is not the fact that this child is increasing in wisdom, stature, and favor that is surprising, but the way that He is increasing in such things.
 - a. For as we read on we come to find that the Son of God is increasing by way of decreasing. He is on the rise by going low. He is ascending by condescending. He will be exalted but only after He has been submitted to all things. He will be made Lord of all by first making Himself servant of all. He will become the Author of Life by first giving Himself over to death.

The Outline

- A. Within the frame of vv. 40, 52, we have the narrative of vv. 41-51. I’m going to divide this narrative into three scenes and attempt to show that Jesus’ exaltation is coming by way of

His submission: (1) To His Bible (vv. 41-45); (2) To His Teachers (vv. 46-47); (3) To His Parents (vv. 48-51); and ultimately, running under it all, (4) To His Father.

(1) Submission to His Bible (vv. 41-45)

Obeying Everything in the Law of God

- A. Vv. 41-45 are just an extension of what we've already seen of Jesus and His family, which is summed up for us nicely in v. 39: "And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth." This family is submitted at every point to the Law of God.
- B. And this is still very much the case twelve years later as they pack their bags and travel up to Jerusalem for the Passover. "If the Law of God calls us to do it, we do it."
 - 1. For Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, depending on the route chosen, such a journey was about an 80-mile (4-day) trip, one way. But we're told they made this happen in obedience to God's command, "every year" (v. 41).
- C. Most important for our purposes here is the inclusion of Jesus in this journey at "twelve years [of age]" (v. 42). Jewish boys were held to be responsible before God at age thirteen, when they became "sons of the commandment" and full members of the local synagogue.
 - 1. He is here, even at this early stage shown to be participating with His parents in obeying "everything" in the Law of God.

For Our Sake

- A. We must not miss the staggering fact that Jesus came to obey the law at every point. Though He is coauthor of it with the Father and the Spirit, He does not put Himself above it, but under it.
 - 1. And He does this for our sake. In the covenant God made with man, it is not God who failed His side of the arrangement, but man. Therefore, God has now come in the flesh, as a man, to uphold our side of the covenant, as our representative.
- B. Here is the great reason for Luke's grass-roots Christology. Man is sinner at every stage of his life—"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa 51:5). Therefore, if Christ is to truly stand in our place, upholding our side of the covenant, working for us a perfect righteousness, He must walk in total obedience to God through every stage of a man's life—from the womb to adulthood.
 - 1. As Irenaeus described it: "He passed through every stage of life. He was made an infant for infants, sanctifying infancy; a child among children, sanctifying childhood, and setting an example of filial affection, of righteousness and obedience; a young man among young men, becoming an example to them, and sanctifying them to the Lord" (The Holy Spirit, p. 45).

- a. The author of Hebrews sums up our discussion nicely: “He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17). To truly redeem us from our infant sins, our youthful sins, our teenage sins, He had to work a righteousness for us at every point.
 - i. I don’t know if there are sins of your youth that just dog you even now. But He walked in obedience as a youth so that His perfect righteousness could count as yours.

The Way of Increase

- A. Putting this scene within the frame of vv. 40, 52 implies that Jesus’ increase in wisdom, stature, and favor is resulting from His submission to His Bible, to God’s law. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Pro 9:10).
 - 1. Do you remember how the covenant was broken with God in the first place? Adam ate from the tree against God’s law in an attempt to attain wisdom and God-like status.
 - a. He wanted that increase but he was not willing to get it by way of submission to the Law of God.
- B. Isn’t this how Satan always allures us? Quicker increase. Faster results. You just need to leave God’s Word to get it. Forget the Bible. It’s an ancient book. It’s irrelevant, outdated. You’re a modern.
 - 1. But the shortcut to wisdom and glory is the fast-track to foolishness and shame. Jesus isn’t going to bite. Are we?

(2) Submission to His Teachers (vv. 46-47)

The Eternal Word beneath Finite Teachers

- A. In the chaos of the return trip to Nazareth, Jesus’ parents lose track of Him in the caravan. And then in vv. 46-47 we read: “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.”
 - 1. There is much about this scene that ought to strike us, but, again, it is the humility, the submission, the decrease of our Lord that stands out most.
 - a. The very Word Himself is permitting His creatures to teach the Word to Him. He is listening and asking. God is putting Himself, in a sense, under man.
- B. In so doing He is showing us the surprising way of increasing in wisdom, stature, and favor.

1. Sadly, we don't realize the wisdom we would have in our answers if only we would learn first to sit among teachers, listen, and ask questions. It is one of the worst impulses of man's sinful nature to give an answer before he has first listened and learned.
 - a. It is amazing how much my children already "know" (write their letters, throw a ball, roller blade, etc.).

- C. I was reminded of those proverbs that speak to this issue. Putting the matter negatively: "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame" (Pro 18:13). Putting it positively: "Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future" (Pro 19:20).

- D. Can anyone teach you? Who do you let speak into your life? If there is no one, if we feel we have already arrived at wisdom's pinnacle, it is most likely we are truly trapped in folly's dungeon. It is part of the stubborn blindness of man to think he sees rightly on his own.
 1. Christ as the perfect expression of humanity, increases in wisdom by decreasing before others, submitting to His teachers, learning from them. Are we doing the same?

(3) Submission to His Parents (vv. 48-51)

The Heavenly Son beneath Earthly Parents

- A. The final scene in vv. 48-51 records a discussion that takes place between Mary and Jesus, and then it ends with this stunning line: "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them..." (v. 51b).
 1. I say "stunning" because we must wonder at the fact that the eternal Son of God, who was with His Father in glory before the world was, is here submitting Himself in humility under His earthly parents!

- B. In so doing He is again showing us the surprising way of increasing in wisdom, stature, and favor.
 1. We live in a culture that sees submission as a dirty word. It's not life to an American but death. "I will come under no one." But we must see that in God's economy it is precisely the opposite.
 - a. For those children severe and stubborn in their insubordination were stoned under Israel's law (Deut 21:18-21).
 - b. And those children that honor their parents are promised long life in the land (Exo 20:12; cf. Eph 6:1-3)

- C. Again it is increase by way of decrease. Our exaltation, our advancement comes from our submission to God and His order of things.
 - 1. That's why I love this church. We have such diversity of age and experience represented here. This is a plea that we be willing to learn from the older generations. That we not pursue the "cool" and the "hip" at the expense of wisdom, stature, and the favor of God.

(4) Submission to His Father

Jesus' Master Principle

- A. Running underneath all three scenes—with Jesus submitting to His Bible, to His teachers, to His parents—is what we might call one master principle. It's a principle that holds all others together. And it's what we discover when we consider the very first words of Jesus recorded in Luke's gospel.
 - 1. Up to this point, Luke has given us testimony after testimony concerning the child. We've heard from Gabriel, from Mary, from Elizabeth, from Zechariah, from the angelic host, from the shepherds, from Simeon, from Anna.
 - a. Now we finally hear from the child Himself, and He gives us the master principle that will govern His life: *"Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? (v. 49).*
- B. All the other points of submission in His life are grounded on this fundamental point of submission to His Father. This is why He submits to His Bible, His teachers, His parents. He is submitted to His Father. He has come to do the will of His Father, to please His Father.
 - 1. And, it would ultimately please His Father to crush Him—to make of Him an offering for our guilt (*Isa 53:10*).
 - a. Here is the extremity of this increasing by way of decrease. He must be pounded into the dirt before He could be exalted into the heavenlies.

Hints towards the Coming Crisis

- A. Within every scene there are hints towards this coming crisis that the Son of God must eventually endure on the cross.
- B. In the first scene (*vv. 41-45*) we must not see it as mere coincidence that the only account Luke records for us of Jesus' life as a youth plays out in the context of the Passover—the blood of the Lamb that covered the people and catalyzed their exodus from Egypt, their redemption from the house of slavery.
 - 1. The whole gospel from *ch. 9* onward is oriented around another trip by Jesus to Jerusalem, where He would celebrate another Passover with His people, only this

time, He would not merely eat of the Passover Lamb, He would be the Passover Lamb—the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

- C. In the second scene (vv. 46-47) we find anticipated the coming conflict Jesus will have with the Jewish leaders. Even as a youth, though He is humble before them, there is indication of His superiority: “And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (v. 47).
 - 1. And while they are amazed at this point, they will soon be infuriated, jealous, murderous. The favor He enjoyed with man would soon give way to wrath: “Crucify Him!” The only wise One will be treated on that cross like a fool, as they mock and spit and kill.
- D. In the third scene (vv. 48-51) we find an elaboration of what Simeon spoke years earlier to Mary: “^{35a} ‘A sword will pierce through your own soul...’” (v. 35a).
 - 1. For when, three days later, finally finds Jesus, she all but rebukes Him with these words: “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress” (v. 48b).
 - a. And even when He explains, they don’t understand. The Son of God has come to undergo something that no one would be quite ready for—a mother most of all.
 - i. O the sword that would pierce, O the great distress that would overtake, as she would watch her Firstborn, writhing in agony on that cross!

Submission through Crucifixion Death into Resurrection Life

- A. And it’s the master principle of submission to His Father that takes Him there: “Not my will, but Yours, be done” (Luk 22:42b).
 - 1. The only One worthy to be called the Son of God would approach His Father’s house one last time, only this time He would not be warmly welcomed but utterly rejected. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46b).
- B. But He would not be ultimately abandoned. In the resurrection, God takes the Messiah’s decrease into death and makes of it an increase of infinite measure.
 - 1. Of His stature: “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name” (Phil 2:9).
 - 2. Of His wisdom—“In [Him] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3).
 - 3. Of His favor, He has become the fountainhead of it for all men: “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16).

- a. On the cross He was not merely being kicked out of His Father's house, He was preparing rooms for sinners like us in His Father's house: " ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (Joh 14:2-3).
- C. The closing point for us is this: we must submit ourselves to the Father even unto death. We will not regret it. He will not let us down.
- 1. We must learn from Christ in all of this. He maintained that master principle of submission to His father, even in the dark. He has gone before us and now, by His Spirit, He goes within us.