

**012 Do You Know Who You Are and
What God Has Called You to Do?**

Luke 2:41-52

Message by Dr R Bruce Montgomery ~ Grace Church ~ 3/4/18

Introduction – video of “On My Father's Side”
Recorded by The Village Singers,
Written by Felecia Shiflett

Just a young boy in the temple one day
Shared with the doctors they were so amazed
Never had they seen one so young speak so swift
They asked him many questions the conversation went
like this

What's your name son?
On my mother's side my name is Jesus
But on my Father's side they call me Emmanuel

How old are you?
On my mother's side now I'm twelve years
But on my Father's side I've just always been

Where you from?
On my mother's side I'm from Bethlehem
But on my Father's side it's New Jerusalem

What's your plan?
On my mother's side I'll be crucified
But on my Father's side in three days I'll arise
And I'll sit by my Father's side

He was the Son of God yet the son of man
And I can't help but wonder how Joseph must have felt
Through an open door that day he heard his son reply
You see I'm the King of Kings that's on my Father's side

The Bible passage for the setting of that song is the one we are looking at today. Turn to Luke 2:41, 42 *Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. 42When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.*

Two weeks ago we were talking about what it was like for the boy Jesus, growing up in Nazareth. Rigorous education, beginning at age five. Literate in three languages: Hebrew – the national religious language, Aramaic – the everyday language of the people, and Greek – the international language of commerce.

Interwoven with the routine life of school and home and synagogue for Jesus, as for all Jews, was a cycle of celebration that revolved around the religious calendar.

Every week had its Sabbath. And every month had the “*day of the new moon.*” Priests were on special duty to watch for the showing of the new moon and would announce it to the nation by blowing silver trumpets from the pinnacle of the Temple. Instantly fires would be lit on the Mt. of Olives and observed from the neighboring hills. In no time the news spread throughout the country.

Most sacred of the new moons was the one of the seventh month, Tishri it was called, which marked the beginning of the New Year. It was a holiday, and was known as the “*day of blowing,*” because the trumpets were blown all day long in Jerusalem.

Most of important of all: fourteen hundred years before, Moses had given instructions for three major feasts that were to be observed by all Jews each year: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, which I imagine was the favorite one for the children. They made little huts from fresh boughs of trees, and as family ate, slept, studied and prayed in them for a whole week. Like an annual “family camp out!”

Each one lasted a week, and every man was to come to Jerusalem to celebrate if he could possibly do so.

Because of the distance from Nazareth (3-4 days walk), Joseph was not required to attend. But he looked on it not as an obligation but a joy. Don't know whether or not he took Mary

and Jesus with him each year, but we do know they went along when Jesus was twelve years old – an important age.

At 12, his religious education in the synagogue school in Nazareth would become more intense as he moved from the elementary school to secondary school.

The age of 12 was also significant in that at this age a boy was to learn a trade to be able to support himself,

And a rabbinic tradition of the first century was that when a boy was 12, as part of his preparation his *bar mitzvah* when he turned 13, he was to be taken to Jerusalem for the observance of the Passover.

Which is what was happening in our Scripture text.

⁴³*After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him; they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.*

In those days' people usually travelled to the festivals in groups, and so Mary and Joseph assumed Jesus was somewhere in the party with his friends or cousins. On arriving at the first night's lodging, they realize he wasn't among the group, so the next day they travel back to Jerusalem. It takes them three days of searching around Jerusalem before they found their son in the Temple. So five days apart.

When they finally found him, he was in the midst of the experts, the PhD's of the law, engaged in the question-and-answer dialogue that was used between students and their mentors. ¹

He was doing two things: *listening to them* – meaning he was hearing their deep theological discussions and understanding what they were talking about, and *asking them questions*. They weren't typical questions they might expect from a twelve year old. He could not only ask intelligent questions he

¹ ⁴⁶*After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.*

was also able to answer their questions. They were amazed.² There was no way he could have learned all this at his age in the Nazareth school system.

Jesus was brought up in a spiritual Jewish home, and had rigorous schooling, but this alone can't explain his tremendous comprehension which enabled him to carry on an intelligent theological discussion with the experts in the Law of Moses at the age of twelve.

There must have been a second source of his information. Luke doesn't give us the detail of where he got the understanding that amazed the greatest teachers in Jerusalem. To get the answer, we go to the Old Testament and the prophecies of the Messiah.

Isaiah's favorite title for the Messiah was "*the servant of Jehovah.*" On of the passages in which he uses that terminology is Isaiah 50.

Isaiah 50:4,5 *The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know that word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.*

Jesus was unique – both God and man. Only one person, but with two natures: a divine nature and a human nature. These two natures existed side by side, but never mixed.

In his deity he is omniscient, but he laid all that aside when he left heaven. In his humanity he simply did not know everything, and had to undergo the same learning experiences that all humans have to go through.

This verse indicates that God the Father awakened His Son each morning to disciple him, train him, teach him who he was and what his mission was to be.

Verse 5. ISAIAH 50:5 *The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.* Even when he realized that his mission included suffering and death,

² ⁴⁷*Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers*

he was not rebellious.³ He didn't turn his back and try to escape his call.

Instead he let his back be beaten and didn't turn his head away when his tormentors pulled out the hairs on his beard or when they spit in his face. Isaiah 50:6 *"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting."*

The individual daily training he had received from His Heavenly Father was obviously at the root of his impressive questions and responses.

Verse 48 - Mary's first response is somewhat typical of a Jewish mother. She tries to lay a guilt trip on him: *"how could you have done this to us?"* She scolds him, because for five days they had not known where he was and had been frantically searching for him.⁴

As a parent, I can be sympathetic. I recall when our two-year old son disappeared that within a few minutes the police were doing a door-to-door search and a helicopter was flying overhead with a loudspeaker. Turns out he was right next door, but Connie was frantic. Can only imagine if he was missing for five days!

In the first recorded words of Jesus, he answers, ⁴⁹*"Why were you searching for me?"* he asked. *"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"* Idea of *"didn't you know where to look for me? Where else would I be?"*

⁵⁰*But they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

The Greek can also be translated *"don't you know I must be about my Father's business,"* or *"about my Father's occupation?"*

He's making the point that at age 12 he isn't only apprenticed to his stepfather's profession of carpentry, but also to his heavenly Father's work.

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⁴ ⁴⁸*When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."*

In Judaism, God is frequently referred to as Father, and addressed thus in prayers. But his fatherhood is always considered to be collective, the Father of Israel, and so he is always called "Our Father," and never "my Father."

So when Jesus says *"my Father's house"* he is identifying himself with God in uniquely intimate terms. By the age of 12, Jesus clearly understood exactly who he was: the Son of God.

Verses 51 and 52 summarize Jesus' development for the next eighteen years. ⁵¹*Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.* ⁵²*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Note three things:

(1) Jesus was subject to them. He was an obedient son.

(2) Mary contemplated what Jesus had said and what he meant when he said he had to be about his Father's business. She was growing in her understanding that he was the Messianic God-Man.

(3) Luke points out that in his humanity Jesus developed in the same four specific areas we all need to develop in:

wisdom – mental development;

stature – physical growth;

favor with God – spiritual, and

favor with man – social development.

Jesus' time alone with the Father didn't lessen once he began his public ministry. We read that he often withdrew from the crowds to be alone with Him, and Jesus' conversations with God the Father continued to be the source of what he taught:

John 12:49,50 *For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. . . . so whatever I say is just what the father has told me to say.*

In John 17:7 he tells the Father *"I gave them the words you gave me."*⁵

⁵ See also **John 17:7** *"Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them."*

Not only was Jesus aware of who he was,⁶ he knew why he had come.

In overall terms, it was to do the will of the Father.

In Hebrews 9:5-9 the author of Hebrews quotes messianic Psalm 40:7,8⁷ and applies it to Jesus. Hebrews 9:9 *he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will."*

John 4:34 *"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."*

John 5:30 *"I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."*

John 6:38 *"For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me."*

More specifically he states his mission in several places.

E.g.: Matthew 20:28 *"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Luke 19:10 *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

John 3:17 *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

Secure in his identity and knowing his purpose he was able to resolutely go the cross, where he died in our place. Along the way his approval ratings soared and plummeted. Lots of followers, but lots of enemies too.

Wasn't blown off course, didn't indulge in "pity parties" of "why me?" because he knew who he was and what the Father had called him to do.

If you're going to successfully deal with all that life hands you, and realize God's best for you, you need to know who you are and what God has called you to do – in general terms and specifically.

The starting point for each of us is to realize that *God is not willing that any should perish . . .* and place your faith in Jesus.

⁶ Cf. the "I Am" statements in the gospel of John

⁷ Psalm 40:7,8 *Then I said, "Here I am, I have come—it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart."*

Romans 10:9 *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

If you have done that, who are you? [Then you are a child of God]. John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Romans 8:17 *Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.*

Assuming you are a child of God, what has God called you to do?

Like Jesus, the overarching principle is to do the will of God – which Paul describes in Romans 12:2 as being *"good, pleasing and perfect."*

Doing God's will is not something burdensome, or hard, but delightful! God has your best interests at heart, and wants you to enjoy life to the full!

Secondly, it is to be serving according to the gifts he has given you. In I Corinthians 12 Paul describes the church as being the living, breathing "Body of Christ."

Just as in the human body, all parts are important! Each needs to be functioning properly for the body to be vibrant and healthy.

The functions in the Body of Christ are often referred to as *spiritual gifts*. Important to discover what your gifts are! Not to be envious or look down on others, because verse 18 *"in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, just as he wanted them to be."*

At Grace Church we have been referring to the past month as "getting involved month," and urging each of you to discover the area of service in the church God has called you to. I don't read in Scripture that this is optional, or that any one is excluded! Each of us needs to be involved and doing what God has called us to do.

I Peter 4:10 *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

How can you know what your gifts are?
Refer to handout in bulletin (see attached)ⁱ

- Read through list gifts in Scriptures listed in Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. Prayerfully go over the descriptions and see which ones interest and excite you. What jumps out at you and says, “that’s me!” Write down the ones you think you may have.
- What do you do already do really well? What are your natural talents, interests, abilities, inclinations that God could use? Usually the Lord starts with us where we are, not trying to totally revamp our whole personality. He starts with natural talents and interests, and then adds supernatural abilities as we grow in maturity and as needs arise.
- What are your desires? What do you want to do more than anything else? Usually your desires are a good starting indication of your gift, as long as you are honest and grounded in the Word. What are you passionate about? Normally the Holy Spirit isn’t going to call you to do something for which you have no inclination, liking, or sensitivity or ability!
- What needs exist in your life, family, community, church that require attention? God will give someone, perhaps you, the spiritual gifts necessary to help meet those needs. Be on the lookout for needs that God can meet through you.
- What do you think the Holy Spirit is telling you to do? Ask the Spirit to reveal to you what your gifts are (after all, he’s the one giving them to you!) Make sure it’s God’s call you are responding to, not just your own feelings.
- What gifts do others in the Body of Christ recognize in you? The Holy Spirit does not work with us in isolation from the other members of the Body of Christ. The others are given insight into our giftedness, and we into theirs, as means of checks and balances. We help one another to be honest to God! So, make sure you ask others!
- Take a spiritual gifts inventory (one such inventory available on table inside library after church today)
- Confirm by sharing the list you’ve made with others who know the “real you.”
- It doesn’t hurt to “experiment” to make sure you are given particular gift or called to a certain ministry. But, do not give

up, like with sports or music; becoming proficient in the exercise of your Gifts takes time and practice!

- Evaluate your effectiveness with them, as a check and balance to make sure you are exercising the right one(s). How comfortable are you using that gift? Do the gifts you are using and the ministries you are in fill you with excitement, or do you feel a stale obligation? How do others respond? God will either confirm it or make it obvious you should keep seeking him.

As in the human body organs and limbs have fixed functions, so it is vitally important that every person be functioning in his or her God-gifted place and role.

It is each believer’s responsibility to find, develop, and exercise the gifts given to him/her! We all need to do the work God gives us to do, all working together. Remember, Gifts are never a platform for power or control; they are to be in conjunction and in harmony with others. All are important, all are needed; you are important and you are needed!

We must acknowledge our role in the Body; there are no *lone wolves* in Christ! We have a duty to fulfill, and a role to play. When we refuse to find and use our Gifts, we not only hurt ourselves, but each other and our Lord! The Church is greatly diminished, the work of the Lord given to us is left undone, and opportunities are missed!

Question: Are you functioning as God intends?

Matthew 11:30 *My yoke is easy and my burden is light*
Each yoke had to be custom made for the ox, horse, mule. As a carpenter, Jesus had no doubt fashioned many of them. If uncomfortable, probably wearing a yoke that isn’t designed to fit you!

i DISCOVERING WHAT GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO DO

1 Peter 4:10 *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

1 Timothy 4:14 *Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*

2 Timothy 1:6 *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

- **Read through the lists of gifts in Romans 12:6-8, I Cor. 12:2-10 and Eph. 4:11.**
- **Which ones interest and excite you?**
- **What do you already do really well?**
- **What are your desires?**
- **What needs exist in your family, community and church that require attention?**
- **What do you think the Holy Spirit is telling you to do?**
- **What gifts to others in the Body of Christ recognize in you?**
- **Take a spiritual gifts inventory.**

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- **Confirm by sharing your list with others who know the “real” you.**
 - **It’s okay to experiment.**