

1st Sunday After Christmas (Series C)

December 27, 2015

Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

Epistle: Heb 2:10-18

Lesson: Jer 31:10-13

Psalm: Psalm 111

CLB Commentary: Dr. Eugene Boe

Luke 2:41-52

This pericope for the First Sunday after Christmas breaks the silence on the boyhood days of Jesus. This is the only story we have from this period of his life, and of the Gospel writers Luke is the only one to include it. We have a rare glimpse into the family life of the growing up years of Jesus.

This passage is also unique in that it has the first recorded words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke and that these words speak to his being God's Son. Arthur Just says in this regard that "The chief point of this passage is to present the first recorded words of Jesus, spoken in response to his mother's questions. In those two short sentences, Jesus speaks about who he is *as the Son of God* and what he must do *as the Son concerned with the Father's business in the Father's house.*"¹

Some notes on the text

2:42 "going up to the festival" ἀναβαινόντων—One always goes up to Jerusalem, not only because of its height, but because this is Zion, the holy mountain where God will come for redemption (cf. 18:10, 31; 19:28).²

2:44-46 "Looking and finding" καὶ ἀνεζήτησαν αὐτόν—Similar expressions are repeated with ἀναζητέω in 2:44-45 and ζητέω in 2:48-49, providing the language for a subtheme in the narrative: seeking and finding Jesus. Jesus knows his destiny and (as a sign) he remains (momentarily) where he should be. As Luke will later imply (2:50), Mary and Joseph do not fully understand where Jesus must be and what he must do. They are continually seeking to discover the mission of their child.³

2:49 James Edwards has a helpful explanation on "Father's house." The NIV rendering, "my Father's house," is an interpretation rather than translation of an unusual and ambiguous Greek expression. It is certainly not improper, as many commentators note, to understand the expression as a reference to the temple.⁴ If Jesus had meant (only) "house," however, there was a clearer way to say it (so 16:27).⁵ The expression *en tois tou patros mou*, which occurs only here in the Bible, literally means "about the *things* [e.g., business, affairs] of

my Father.” This suggests a more comprehensive understanding of God. Although it includes a reference to God’s abode, it also incorporates the *mission* of the God whom Jesus knows as “my Father.”^{6 7}

Edwards further notes, “In identifying God as his Father, and in addressing God intimately and exclusively as “*my Father*,” Jesus fulfills the messianic ideal.⁸ Luke earlier referred to Mary as “the mother of the Lord” (1:43). Even this sublime distinction, and Mary’s maternal ties, must yield to Jesus’ heavenly Father.⁹ The first (2:49) and last (24:49) words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke refer to God as his Father. Jesus’ intimate and filial relation to God as Father is the center and sum of his life and ministry.”^{10 11}

Edwards’ comment on the person of Jesus as revealed in this narrative: “The story of Jesus in the temple bears subtle witness to his two natures, the divine and human. The all-too-human separation of a child from his parents in a crowd, and the equally human panic of the parents, attests to the humanity of the characters. Nevertheless, this very human boy is at home in the temple and natively identifies with the work of God, whom he calls “my Father.” Two fathers are mentioned in the account, one human, one divine, and Jesus is the son of both. His parents “did not understand what he was saying to them” (v. 50), nor do we. Faith and understanding are not guaranteed by the privilege of proximity to Torah, angels, God, or even Jesus. Zechariah was visited by Gabriel, yet he disbelieved (1:20); Mary (and Joseph) received more revelation than he, yet they do not understand. The story of Jesus is the story of the inscrutable and unfathomable ways of God. This story is not understood in a flash of insight. Time, struggle, even suffering are required of the parents of Jesus, as of all people, if they are to know and follow Jesus.”¹²

A helpful concise summary by Martin Franzmann:

“The one recorded incident from Jesus’ boyhood shows Him walking the path of obedience. The story begins with His obedience to the Law which established the *Passover* and prescribed its celebration (Ex 12:1–6; 23:15; Dt 16:1–8); it ends with Jesus’ obedience to His parents, obedience to the Fourth Commandment, which He later defended so fiercely against the encroachments of tradition (Mt 15:4). In this setting we hear His first words. In these words God is, for the first time in Luke, expressly called Jesus’ *Father*. In these words Jesus expresses His high consciousness of His mission and office; His life is to be uniquely a human life wholly lived to God, a life which is in all its parts and in every aspect an act of worship, as man’s life ought to be and never had been. He *must be in His Father’s house*, obedient in the place and for the salvation of all. Here begins the career of obedience “unto death, even death on a cross” (Ph 2:8). Here for the first time Mary has a premonition of the sword that is to pierce her soul. (Cf. 35)”¹³

Some themes to consider:

What Child is This?

Who is this Son that God Has Given Us?

A Son to Treasure

1 Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 1996), 128.

2 Arthur A. Just Jr. 126.

3 Ibid.

4 Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.36.2, uses the same phrase to refer to house. In support of the meaning “house,” Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, 149–50, notes insightfully that “Father’s house” fits with searching for Jesus, but “Father’s business” does not.

5 The inclusiveness of the Greek is preserved in Delitzsch’s Hebrew NT, *ehyeh baasher leabi*, “I will be about that of my Father.”

6 For a full discussion of the various translational options, see Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 443–44.

7 James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 95.

8 Church fathers often saw in Jesus’ response a declaration of co-eternality with God (see Just, *Luke*, 55). The category and nomenclature of co-eternality, however, derive from later Christological debates of the third and fourth centuries.

9 So Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 438.

10 Bovon, *Lukas* 1,1–9,50, 155. For Jesus’ references to God as Father in Luke, see 2:49; 10:21–22; 11:2; 22:29, 42; 23:34, 46; 24:49.

11 Edwards, 96.

12 Edwards, 96.

13 Walter H. Roehrs and Martin H. Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, electronic ed., vol. 2 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1998), 62.