

Sermon: Responsibility over Spirituality?

Text: Luke 2:41-52

Pray over the Text:

Opening:

Good Morning! Well I have a few questions for us today. I enjoy a good question, because it gets us thinking. I have two questions, one is a bit simple and the other one might get you to think a little bit. So here's my first question:

'What were you like as a kid? Kid, meaning the ages of I guess 4-12ish or so. For some of us that was 10 years ago, others that was 20 years ago, for others it was 20 plus years ago. Or maybe you are in that season, you're a kid in this service or a kid at heart. But regardless, what were you like? What did you enjoy? What kinds of things did you think about and look at? What kind of things fascinated you, and what grabbed your attention? What made you mad, what made you glad?

I remember when I was a kid, I remember that I had my different group of friends. I had friends from school, I had my neighborhood friends, and I had my Church friends from a little Korean Church that I attended. And it's funny cuz for all my time hanging out with those guys, I don't think they ever saw each other. My Korean youth group friends never saw my neighborhood friends and those group of friends never saw my school friends. It got me thinking, hmm-I wonder which friends were the most important ones to me. Maybe my school friends knew me the best, and I tried to impress them-maybe my neighborhood friends taught me the most about the world, mostly bad things, and my Korean Church friends-well, I don't know about them either. But even as a kid, I noticed that I would put my friends and my life into categories-this category is school, this one is my Church, this one is my neighborhood. Cool childhood, huh?

How about you? Do you have any memories that stick out to you today?

And the second question: It'll seem unrelated to the first question, but let's see if we can tie it together later. My question is: 'What is more important? Responsibility or Spirituality?' Responsibility or Spirituality? Meaning, that are our duties more important than our faith? The sacred or the secular? The mundane day to day tasks or the spiritual uplifting faith experiences? The things we have to do, like school, work, chores, being a parent or a spouse, being a son or a daughter, a citizen and an employee are all responsibilities. Are those things inherently more significant and valuable to our spiritual counterpart? Of praying and community, Scripture

meditating and retreating, fasting and giving of our generous wealth, being with God and practicing the Christian disciplines, the seemingly “more spiritual” tasks.

Maybe the second question will be a bit harder to answer, if we’re being honest with ourselves. Maybe you were and are a bit like me in that you compartmentalize not only your friends but your life into categories of “spiritual” and “secular” and don’t see the connection within them. Possibly the question that will be going through our minds is also this—since it’s not so simple—

Fallen Condition Focus: How do I balance spirituality and responsibility? How do I worship God when I have so many responsibilities that keep me away from Him? All these distractions?

Well, I ask those questions today because I hope that through this text that Luke shows, we can see both aspects of Jesus relevant to the questions aforementioned. We will see this text, the only one mentioned in the Bible of Jesus, when he was a child, and also we will be seeing how his example and his life give us some guiding principles to how we are to answer the all important question of which is more important: our responsibility and duty or our spirituality and faith. And the natural tension that lies within having both in our lives.

You might be wondering, hey “why are we even reading this text? What about Jesus as a boy stands out that we could learn and glean from it?”

It’s interesting, first of all, that this really is the only occurrence in all of the Bible where Jesus is mentioned as a boy, a kid, a child. He is not yet an adult, the One who would be preaching and healing, nor is he the baby Messiah who shepherds and angels would come and adore. This, found in Luke’s Gospel, is the only instance we find Jesus somewhere in between. Luke the author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote out his book to show and highlight that Jesus was fully divine and also fully man. By showing that Jesus was not only divine God, but also a human, he showed a God who came to bear and empathize with humanity, a God who would stoop into our timeline, from the eternal to the temporal, and in it the fact Jesus indeed lived a human life shows us that through his example and perfect sacrifice we too, are made whole.

And it’s also interesting that this is the account of Jesus as a child that Luke decided to depict. He could have possibly shown us a more “exciting” scene, or something that would get us really stirred up in controversy or in awe. But really, it seems like a fairly tame passage. No miracles, no healing of the dead, no Jesus flying out to impress his friends or Jesus playing a prank on Joseph. Could you imagine? “Hey dad—look! I’m walking on water! Or—Hey mom—I brought you some bread and fish. Oh just kidding, here’s 5000 more.” But no, none of that—Luke doesn’t even

suggest or mention any abuse of Jesus' power or him fooling around with his divinity. Which, is actually very important to note-

Because in some other "fake" Gospels, some that other authors wrote as a historical fiction and mere speculation. Actually, the most notable one is the false "Gospel of Thomas", which show some stories of the boy Jesus raising clay pigeons from the dead and Jesus abusing his power to show off to his childhood friend. It even tells of Jesus scolding a child which strikes the child dead at an instant. Now, these books are extra biblical, none of them actually are factual but made up. Because unlike Luke and our other Gospels in the Bible, these books were not written by the claimed author. The Gospel of Thomas was not actually attributed to Thomas, so our Church fathers would reject such books as uninspired. And they are seen as fairy tales that were merely used to spread stories about the boy Jesus, and our Real Gospels in the Bible paints a much more consistent and accurate picture of the real Jesus.

So why does Luke, of all the stories of Jesus that he could have chose, by asking Mary and other family members, give such a seemingly underwhelming story about a boy in the temple? Well, the text we read have several implications for us-Luke 2 shows us about

Jesus the divine, in his spirituality

Jesus the man, in his responsibility

And Jesus our example, in his wholeness

And with that, the point of today's sermon is this-in looking at Jesus as a boy, in his full humanity and divinity, in his example and humility,

Main Point:

Jesus shows us that spirituality and responsibility are not contradictory, but are complementary

And so let's look at Jesus' divinity, humanity, and his example to further help us. But before that,

Looking at some context here first, Luke sets us up at a time of the year when Jesus' family was going to observe a common religious holiday. It said in verse 41 that they were making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. Most good Jewish families were expected to attend this, and Jesus' family, being a good Jewish family, went and observed it as well.

Imagine going to Church on Christmas, for these people the Feast of the Passover was as common as such an event. It also says he was twelve years old, so not quite an adult yet, but by then Jesus would have been a bit more independent, learning perhaps of some of his father's carpentry skills, and learning from his surroundings. It says that his parents, probably lost in the

busyness and the chaos of the festivities, left actually without Jesus. Now, it seems somewhat negligent, but if we remember that they didn't have minivans and cars to keep track of where their son was at all times, and with such large crowds and families traveling, it's a bit easier to imagine that his parents probably assumed he was "with the crowd", on his way back. Maybe they thought he was with an uncle or a relative, as it said in the passage they were with their family.

Regardless, Joseph and Mary go back to Jerusalem to seek him out, and see him amidst the teachers of the law and religious leaders being amazed at this boy; which leads to the

First Point: Jesus in his Divinity-

For some of you, when I asked the question in the beginning, might have thought that responsibility is more important than our spirituality. Is that true? Maybe you think that it's more important to stress on your duty as an employee or a student. That you need to focus on these before anything else, because it's the practical. What does Jesus say of it?

Let's look at Jesus the boy in his divinity. Kinda weird to think about, a boy being God-but Jesus was well aware of his own divinity at this moment, and his parents were learning more and more about it as well. It's funny, because you would think that after seeing a virgin birth, seeing wise men and angels come and bow down and announce this baby as the Messiah of the world, you would think something would be different about this boy. But we get some hints that the boy Jesus was actually fairly normal, perhaps not that different from a classmate in 5th grade, because they seemed surprised at his actions and did not understand his sayings as well. So his parents had probably seen a relatively normal Jesus, as they were more surprised him than anything here in this passage when they find him in the temple.

In verse 46, it said that he was asking and answering questions among the teachers-not just for a few minutes, but for a few days! And in verse 47 it reads "All who heard him were amazed at his answers"-Could you imagine being amazed at anything a normal 12 year old would have to say? I mean, when I was 12, probably the most profound thing I said was "yes mom, I'm sorry I was wrong." That would be a miracle for a 12 year old to say. I mean, 12 year olds are not that smart, sorry 6th graders, sorry I know there are parents of exceptional 6th graders here, but it would take a lot for a 12 year old to amaze you with his or her words, would it not? But these religious teachers, experts, whose job was to study the Bible, were amazed at the depth and insight this boy gave to them. We see that Jesus was not just a boy, not just a prepubescent male whose focus was on playing street ball and videogames, but a boy who had some insight to the things of eternity.

Most profound was this-when his parents ask why Jesus had stayed back, in their confusion, Jesus replies thus in verse 49 “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” Meaning, he knew that his relationship to God the Father was his most important relationship with him, and he had an awareness of his own divinity, the fact that he could articulate that to his own earthly parents. He knew for how good his earthly family was, he had an eternal relationship with his Father in heaven. And in this, Joseph and Mary were probably like: “wha?” and we can’t blame them, it was probably confusing for them as well. But it also said that in v 51 Mary, his mother, treasured up all these things in her heart. So she wasn’t mad at Jesus, she knew something was special about him. She believed in the promise that was given to her, Mary took time to reflect and consider the fact that Jesus, the boy that she birthed as a virgin, was indeed different. That she recognized that God had set him apart, and so she meditated and stored these things up, although perhaps not fully understanding.

So Jesus, in his divinity, recognized the importance of connection to His Father, in growing, in learning, in prioritizing his walk with God as the most important thing in His life. But, as the second point shows, in Jesus being a “spiritual” boy, in no way was he disrespectful or over spiritualized this relationship over his earthly duties or his responsibility as a son.

Let’s look at Jesus in his humanity:

You know maybe some of you, when I asked the question earlier, might have thought that spirituality is the more important duty to focus on. Some of you, might see that your spiritual aspects of life, such as prayer, fasting, Bible study and discipleship is obviously the priority and this is what we need to focus on, and as long as this area is good, the others will be too. That surely these things are more important than our day to day tasks or chores. Well, what does Jesus say?

We get a glimpse of Jesus’ character here, as well as the character of God. The God we serve is a humble God. If Jesus, recognizing who he was, as Son of God and Messiah of the world, certainly could have done whatever he wanted to. But he actually did not. It shows more of his obedience and submission to his earthly parents more than anything. It shows that he was willing to follow his parents up to the Feast, as a family, it shows in verse 51 that after his parents found him, “he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them”-He listened to them, he obeyed them, even though, he really was the One with more knowledge and power.

Also, we get no picture that Jesus was actually disobedient here-on the contrary, though he was spending time in the temple with the teachers and asking questions, he doesn’t start to argue with his parents or fight them, telling them that he’s God and they’re not so they need to pipe down, or “My ways are higher than your ways”, he simply states that he was having time with his

Father, and obeys them and simply returns. I think this is a great testimony of the God we serve. Gods in other religions lord over others, wanting power, wanting to look and feel important, but our God came as a mortal boy, weak, and was willing to follow imperfect created beings, although he had been in eternity with the Father up until then.

A word to believers who still live under your parent's' care. Which should be most of us. Jesus, in his example was humble to submit to his parents, although he was their God, and perfect. Many of us, though we are imperfect, and not God, but merely think in our own minds "we know better" than our mother or father, can we really do as we want? If the God of the Universe had to submit and be an obedient child for a time he was entrusted under their care, though he was a perfect Man, I wonder if we should recognize the importance of obedience to our parents as well, for we are flawed and our pride gets in the way. Maybe you have unbelieving parents and this is a tension for you. Yes, you might know more than your mom or dad, but still God has given your earthly parents the stewardship to be over you for a time. So love them as best you can without sinning. And others of you, recognize that your parents have plenty of spiritual help to offer, and we can learn to submit to them because out of our love for God we love our parents where they're at, not if they meet our criteria. Jesus, in his humanity, came as a humble servant and though he did not have to, obeyed to the fullness of his humanity.

Yes, Jesus was God, but as a full man, he took responsibility-and recognized that he had a duty as an earthly son, to his parents. And he obeyed to the full extent, not sinning or complaining in the process. That is Jesus in his humanity. Even as a boy, he was perfect in following not only His Heavenly Father but also his earthly father and mother, as flawed that they might have been. Jesus didn't fight his parents off because of their lack of knowledge, he doesn't rebuke them, he simply is submissive to them. He went with them as they told him to.

Let's turn the table and look at Jesus in his example, and his authority in our lives- This passage is sandwiched between two important verses, which mirror each other. Verse 40 said that Jesus grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. And then we get our passage, which tells of the boy Jesus in the temple, and is sandwiched with the bookend of verse 52-"and Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man"-Jesus gives us a holistic picture. He grew not just spiritually, but also physically, intellectually, relationally, and in all these things. He developed in all these different areas. Not just one over the other, but completely: with people and with God. Physically and spiritually.

Point is this-we compartmentalize things don't we? It's like a pizza-anybody like pizza? Pizza or pie, I guess either way-And this slice is my spirituality and Church, this other splice is my responsibility and this slice is my relationships, and this slice is my finances, this slice is my physical well being, and this slice is my sexuality, and this slice my emotional being...see how

we do? I do this all the time. I think that me growing physically and emotionally are somehow contradictory to my faith and spiritual duties. I think that my financial aspects are somehow more secular and my emotional being, well, that's more spiritual, since we cry when we sing worship songs...We think that being a son or a daughter is a separate category all on its own, whereas Bible study and evangelism, those areas are more important, those slices of the pizza pies should bear more weight.

Do you see my point? Sometimes we, in our over compartmentalizing different sectors of our life, whether that be responsibility or spirituality, see in turn that these are somehow contradictory. And yet Jesus, in this passage, through his example and his character, shows us that indeed it's all belonging to him. My duty and my faith are both belonging to God. Spirituality in praying and fasting in worship, and my responsibility of being an employee, a child, a father, a steward, those are complementary in my walk with God. I need both to thrive. Without one or the other, we become unhealthy.

But with that said, yes, we should prioritize certain things-such as our faith in God, over just our duties, but it doesn't mean that God has placed your responsibility of being a husband, a mother, a son, a student, a daughter, an employee for the purpose of distracting you from your spirituality.

I think that the big dilemma we face is that we have so much duty-so much things and different things we are responsible for-you might be a busy mom, and working a job, and maybe you need to also take care of your parents-managing finances, doing chores, it's overwhelming-maybe it seems like that by you having to focus on these things somehow you are a less "spiritual" person, for in the mundane you don't see how these things could aid your relationship with the Lord. And I think that we need to step away from this mindset. For in the mundane God works, and even Jesus himself worked in the mundane, as a baby, a boy, and as a carpenter for some 30 years a good majority of his life. Who are we to say those years were any less holy?

Climax:

Sometimes we can go one way too much, right? Well, we see that some of us are on the "over spiritualizing" side-we think that by attending Church, joining committees, doing Bible studies, going on missions trips, by doing these "spiritual" things, it somehow gets us closer to God. But, if you focus on those areas but neglect to be a father, neglect being a student and you fail your classes, if you get fired from a job for taking four hour lunch breaks to do a quiet time, ask yourself-is that being a good steward? Am I a good witness if I focus on God but not on my job as a student or as a parent or employee? I'm sure we have heard of many pastors that have to resign because their spouse or children, their family life is in distress. Is that the picture we want to paint to the world? We take care of God matters but not with our family? Or that we love God

enough to read our Bible but not enough to be a good steward at our job as a student or employee?

Or go the other way-Maybe your dilemma is that you are too practical and not focused enough on the eternal. You are good at your job as a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer, a student, a parent, or fill in the X, but the duties of life are just overwhelming that really, you can't see that how any of those things, the ordinary, fill a purpose to glorify God. It's hard to see how you sitting at a desk, typing away and working 8-5 each day, or studying for a course from 7pm to 4 am in the morning could be any redeeming to God. You enjoy what you do, or maybe you just do it because it is your duty to your family or to your finances, but because of the compartmentalizing sectors of life you don't see how it relates to your faith at all.

Church, here is the good news. The bad news is that we will fail in both ways. I have failed both as the overly spiritual guy who neglects his duties, but also as an overly practical guy who forgets to see God in the mundane day to day life. Let's stop looking inward and look to God-

Jesus the responsible son-We see that Jesus, in his humility, was a responsible boy. He obeyed his parents, did not sin in any way by being rebellious. He didn't say that his duty as a son was somehow less spiritual or an inconvenience to his growth. In fact, he grew in all areas, responsibility being one of them. Look at his example-even if you find what you do now meaningless or trivial, the Savior himself was obedient, as a boy to his parents, later as a carpenter, working hard and for daily wages, but faithfully giving it his all. Look to his example.

Jesus the spiritual God-But not only that, Jesus was not only the perfect man, who in perfect obedience could live the perfect sinless life, he was divine. He did not place one thing above the other as we do with our so called pizza slices-he was a good son, obedient, but also recognized the importance that his primary call was to God first-as he even said himself, dwelling in his Father's house. But in it, he did not compartmentalize as we often so do. He saw both his duty to God his Father and his obedience to his parents as important.

Yes, our faith in God is the priority. But Jesus saw that in order to be devoted to God as a completely spiritual being, the mundane tasks of following our earthly duties was called by God as well. These responsibilities, as an obedient son, a carpenter, a student, were only complimentary and helpful to his growth as a boy becoming man. Do you see the responsibilities placed in your life as that, as ways to honor and glorify God with little acts of obedience? And thereby pleasing your Father in heaven? I wonder instead of seeing our school or our spouse or children or work as a distraction or hindrance to our faith, I wonder if we could see it all a part of honoring God, in the mundane and seemingly trivial. If anything, God is glorified just in you

playing with your children on a weekend as much as you go to a Bible study or read a spiritual book.

Gospel Revealed: The passover

Let's be honest though-after we return to our desks at school and at work and at home, we will soon forget and fail. And try as we might, we will never completely be the whole person God intended us to be. We will strive but never quite get there. And it's discouraging. And it's not just discouraging, it's damning. I am reminded every time, daily when I fail to be the whole man God has called me to be. I know I should see my responsibilities as a son, a father, a husband, an employee, as belonging to God and part of my spirituality, but I forget and I either idolize it or demonize it. By worshiping and over prioritizing relationships, my job or my family, I forget about my faith in God being the priority. And on the other hand by neglecting my studies or my duties as a spouse, I in turn miss out on an opportunity to worship God in the mundane tasks in the day to day.

But, there is good news. We can repent. And we can turn to God. Why? Philippians 2:8 says that Jesus "being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" Church, the same Jesus, who obeyed his parents in the temple, obeyed later by suffering, by submitting to God in the Garden, submitting him on the cross by his crucifixion. By living the life you could not live, dying the death we deserved, and cleansed us. Jesus had the power to do so for he was God incarnate, the divine who became flesh. By living the perfectly responsible and spiritual life, not compartmentalizing but in all things surrendering to God, Jesus was the perfect man. And God sees you through Jesus' perfect record now, when we place our faith in him. His perfect resume for your piece of trash. His record yours.

So confess to him that you don't have the power to be both the responsible and spiritual one. You will never balance this tension without his help. Through his perfect life, we are also made perfect by faith in Christ. You are now accepted, a child of the King. So now go and act like one. So repent to him, and see his example as something to strive for. But know we will only get there if we keep our eyes on him, as he is the One at work. If you do not know this Savior, I ask you to open your hearts to him as we pray and worship. We invite you to be a part of this great news. And for the rest of us, turn to him and see him as the victor, your motivator, the One who is perfect and gives you his perfect record for your mess.

I want to leave you with some closing questions-

Application Questions:

- 1.) What areas of my life am I compartmentalizing instead of seeing it all as God's?
- 2.) How have I neglected my responsibilities and used spirituality as an excuse?
- 3.) How have I neglected my spirituality and used responsibility as an excuse?

Let's pray, turn from these things, and worship him together.