

OUR LORD'S GROWING UP YEARS
Luke 2:40-52

Intro: Every Christmas we spend at least one Sunday, and often more than one Sunday, considering from the Scriptures the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes we have examined some phase of the historical records given to us in Matthew and Luke; at other times we have taken up either OT prophecies of the coming of Christ, or the teaching of the NT epistles which explain for us the meaning of the birth of Christ. And I am sure that none of us feels that we have heard enough about the first advent of our Lord.

Every Easter we spent time thinking about the death and resurrection of our Lord. I have many messages among my notes on those two events in the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I am sure that we would agree that we cannot spend too much time seeking to understand what the Lord did when He died on the Cross, and then was raised from the dead. Counting today, because of how our regular schedule was interrupted by our Bible Conference and then by Easter, we have had three Sundays during which we have observed the Lord's Supper. But I have not heard anyone say, "This is too much." We can never overemphasize the importance of the Lord's Supper and what it represents.

The birth of Christ and the death of Christ, two of the greatest subjects in Scripture, subjects which we can never exhaust regardless of how many times we focus our attention upon them.

But what do we know about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ after He was born and until He died?

In the early days of my ministry I remember a questionnaire that was sent out to hundreds of pastors. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out if there were some part of the Scriptures that preachers were using more than others. When the questionnaires came back they showed that overwhelmingly pastors were preaching from the four Gospels, and especially from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Not all of the men questioned were evangelicals. In fact, it is probably correct to say that most of them were not evangelicals. But it showed that the OT was being neglected, and the NT epistles were being neglected. As a result it seems that evangelicals started to neglect the Gospels, and in particular the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

What we ought to do is to preach all of the truth--OT history, OT poetry, OT prophecy, the Gospels, NT history in the book of Acts, the NT epistles, and the book of the Revelation

of Jesus Christ. Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had "not shunned to declare" unto them "the whole counsel of God." To accomplish this is one reason we seek to cover all of the Bible, books and doctrine, in our SS lessons. And this is why, in reading our Bibles, we need to read all of it. We probably all have books or passages which we enjoy in a special way, but while we must not neglect them, we must not turn our attention to them to the neglect of other books or passages of Scripture. If we do, our understanding of the Bible is going to be lopsided, out of focus. Nothing in Scripture is unimportant. God would not give us any book which He did not expect us to know as well as we can.

Having said all of this, I want to direct your attention from time to time in our evening services toward the life of our Lord on earth. This is not going to be a series because I will also be dealing with other passages. But I feel that we have a need to understand more about our Lord's life here on earth--what He did, what He taught, the people He was with, and so on.

Tonight I want us to think about OUR LORD'S GROWING UP YEARS.

I think that most of you know that the Gospel writers give us very little about this period in our Lord's life. We know that He was circumcised when He was eight days old. We know that He was taken by Joseph and Mary into Egypt while He was still a baby. We know that when our Lord was twelve years old He began to go with Joseph and His mother to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. But from that point on until our Lord began His public ministry at 30 years of age, we know nothing of what happened to Him. We do know that He worked with Joseph as a carpenter but that is all. The one who has told us most of what we do know about our Lord's early years is Luke.

In a very brief section found at the end of Luke 2, verses 40 through 52, we have what is really a digest of what was going on during those years. And Luke relates it for us in the context of our Lord's first trip to Jerusalem for the Passover. It was there at 12 years of age He showed His unusual wisdom as He discussed the truth with the "doctors" of that time. And we learn from Luke 2:47 that "all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." There is no indication that the Lord was trying to show the doctors how much He knew, but simply that our Lord had a great hunger, as well as great understanding of the truth of God, for a young man twelve years old.

Now there is much about the humanity of our Lord which we do not fully understand. We have trouble knowing how an infi-

nite God could learn anything. It shows how completely human He was although He never ceased to be the Son of God. But I want us to consider this passage tonight thinking of our Lord as an Example for teenagers, and for young adults. We are all predestined to be like our Lord, but we probably have not given enough thought to what the Lord was like when He was our particular age. What kind of a boy was He? How did He treat His parents? What was He interested in? We don't have a lot of information, but we do have enough to give us some help. And in these days when it seems to be expected that the years of our youth are years of trouble, it is refreshing to take even a brief look at the life of our Lord as a boy growing up, and as a young man before He began His public ministry.

Now let me read Luke 2:40-52 to see what Luke has recorded for us. (Read.)

Luke gives us this time when our Lord was twelve, when He went with Joseph and Mary to observe the Passover. We can only guess that our Lord stayed behind because it would only have been then that He would have been able to talk to the "doctors" by Himself after most of the people had returned to their homes. But His behavior with the "doctors," His reason for being there, His attitude toward His parents when they came after Him, plus what we are told particularly in two verses--40 and 52, give us much food for thought, much guidance for those of you who are in this age bracket (before he was 12, at 12, and on to 30). The Lord is our Example, and we are predestined to become like our Lord. So we actually cannot start too soon.

How can we describe our Lord during those years? Let me just briefly point out what we have here.

First, let us look at verse 40. I take this as speaking of what we was:

I. BEFORE HIS TWELFTH BIRTHDAY (Luke 2:40).

These were a part of His growing up years.

A. He "waxed strong in spirit."

Many feel that the words "in spirit" were added from the description of John the Baptist in Luke 1:80, but let us take it as it is here. It is reasonable to expect that we would be told that the Lord developed physically, i.e., that He "grew," but that there was something else rather unique about our Lord. He was going to grow physically, but it seems that this expression, "waxed (or, became) strong in spirit," means

that our Lord was not just concerned about what He was in body, but what He was inwardly, "in spirit." He knew that He would some day be a man, but early in his youth He was thinking about what kind of a man He would be.

Dr. Willard Aldrich used to remind the students at Multnomah that what you are to be, you are becoming. Our Lord knew that we cannot waste our youth and suddenly expect to be something entirely different as we become adults. Perhaps Joseph and Mary really impressed this upon Him.

B. "Filled with wisdom."

This does not mean that He knew all that He was going to learn as a boy and a young man, but that He was constantly learning, learning day by day. We look at our Lord and we can see that it is possible for children at a very early age to show a special interest in learning. And the learning here which was demonstrated in Jerusalem later, had to do with learning the truth of God. You can be sure that the Lord started early in life to learn about the Hebrew Scriptures, the books we call today, the Old Testament.

C. "The grace of God was upon him."

This was not something which he did for Himself. It was evidence in His life that God was blessing Him, helping Him, even using Him. What a delight this must have been to Joseph and Mary to see clear evidence in our Lord's life, even before He was twelve years of age, that "the grace of God was upon him." That would delight any parent.

II. OUR LORD AT TWELVE (Luke 2:41-51).

This time in our Lord's life is described in most of the passage.

Three things of extreme importance can be said about this time in our Lord's life:

A. Our Lord had a deep interest in the Word of God.

He was anxious to be with the "doctors" so that He could learn more from them. Young people, make friends of those who can help you in your understanding of the Word. Listen carefully to your parents, your teachers at church. Read books that will help you. And, above all, read the Word of God itself.

As the Lord talked to the "doctors" they were amazed at his understanding of the truth, and at the answers to the ques-

tions which they must have directed to Him. He was not offensive with His knowledge. In fact, He seems to have won the hearts of those to whom He had gone for teaching.

Secondly, when Joseph and Mary came back to Jerusalem looking for Him,

- B. Our Lord showed that even a twelve year old is capable of serving the Lord.

I realize that there can be something very distinct about the Lord here. He realized by this time that He had come to earth on a special mission. But why should we wait until our children are out of high school or out of college before we talk to them about living for the Lord, and serving Him. A twelve year old will not do what he will do ten or twenty years later, but God has a purpose for all of our lives, and it is interesting to see that our Lord had this understanding when He was only twelve.

- C. Our Lord was submissive to His parents.

The Lord put first things first. He wanted to be with the "doctors." He was intensely interested in what they had to tell Him, and His discussion with them. But He knew that if His parents wanted Him at home, that was where He should be. And this is what we read that He did according to verse 51. His mother knew that wonderful things were taking place in the heart of her Son. She couldn't explain it all, but neither did she want to forget any of it.

The last verse of this chapter speaks of:

III. OUR LORD FROM TWELVE TO THIRTY--AND FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE (Luke 2:52).

Luke mentioned four things here.

- A. "Jesus increased in wisdom."

There is no question but that Luke was speaking here about the wisdom of God. Our Lord as a Man on earth never lost His interest in nor His love for the Word of God.

- B. "And in stature."

This does not just mean that there were many physical differences between the Lord at 12 and at 30, but it means that He was maturing. He was growing outwardly and inwardly. He continue to become the Man that the Father intended Him to be, an Example of what all mature adults should be, and a

special example to men.

C. "And in favour with God." *Cf. Prov. 3:4.*

"Favour" is the Greek word for grace. It means that through our Lord's love for the Word, and the maturing that it produced in Him as a person, the greatest priority in His life was to do what is pleasing to the Lord.

All of us know what peer pressure is, the pressure to do what everybody else is doing. It continues to be pressure upon us throughout our lives. The Lord lived above that even as a young man so that it is not surprising that He would say when He became a man, "I do always those things that please him," speaking of His Father. Our Lord learned as a Man that nothing is really right in any part of our lives if we are not living to please God.

D. "And in favour...with man."

This tells us how gracious the Lord was with men. Many men hated Him, but they would wonder "at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." The Lord was not like the Pharisees who really did not care what men thought of them. Our Lord was loving and gracious and tender, and this is why the multitudes followed Him in such great numbers.

Concl: I hope that this passage has provoked some thought with all of us, but especially with you young people. Let the Lord Jesus be your Example of what you ought to be in these growing up years of your life. If you do, you will never regret it. Seek what He sought. Do what He did. Let the things that were important to Him, by the grace of God, become important to you.

Let me make one closing suggestion. One book that our Lord must have been very familiar with is the book of Proverbs. Let it become a favorite with you, too, and the blessings you will receive will follow you all of the years of your life.