

MATURED

Luke 2:41-52

How's your memory? Sometimes we can't remember what we had for lunch yesterday and all of us have experienced situations in which we are introduced to someone and five minutes later we cannot remember the person's name. On the other end of this memory spectrum, we can remember things that happened decades ago, even some things that happened in our very early childhood years when we were maybe three or four years old.

It might be interesting to explore in the recesses of our minds what might be the very early memories that are hidden away. Usually, such ancient memories are associated with significant events such as birthdays, or holidays, happy occurrences or traumatic events. One of my early memories was when President Roosevelt died and one of my older sisters answered the phone and someone passed on the information. I was just four years old then.

Can we remember when we first began to "interact" with God by making requests or talking to Him? I can remember having a consciousness of God at a very young age and trying to interact with Him by prayer. Was this because I went to Sunday School in my preschool years or because of something someone in my family said? I have no idea how that happened. When does a realization of "spiritual" things start in a person's life and why does it grow in some and fade away in others? Those are difficult questions; yet, we read in Paul's letter to the Roman church that "what may be known of God is manifest in us, for God has shown [it] to us."

We may gain some insight into such things by exploring an incident in the life of Jesus where His actions showed that He realized or recognized a special relationship with the "spiritual" realities of life. It is important for us to learn from His responses since He is the Way in which we are to walk in our lives. As we do this examination, we do so acknowledging that the interconnections of the human and divine elements in Jesus of Nazareth were unique and inexplicable. At the same time, we also realize that each person (made in the image of God) has an inexplicable interconnection with the Creator and those who have been born again of the Spirit of God are further enabled to enjoy a significantly meaningful relationship to our heavenly Father.

Engaged – 2:41-47

⁴¹ Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; ⁴³ and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, ⁴⁴ but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. ⁴⁶ Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. Luke 2:41-47 (NASB95)

Luke's account sets the stage for this significant incident in the otherwise obscure early life of Jesus. In this account, we see that Jesus' earthly parents religiously observed the customs and laws of that culture. That fact, in and of itself, may be significant in that the environment in the home and in the community in which the young boy Jesus grew up was one in which people acknowledged God and His influence on their lives in a "matter-of-fact" way. This was just part of the fabric of the social order.

In the Christian community of which many of us are familiar we have some similar elements of this impact. For example, many routinely attend church, engage in Vacation Bible School, give regularly to the church, and have prayer before meals. These practices help to create an atmosphere of acceptance of spiritual realities along with the more obvious physical

realities of life.

One of the more important milestones in a person's life in the Jewish culture of that time (and even today) was the recognition of the transition from childhood to maturity. This maturity transition was marked by a ritual or rite of passage ceremony called Bar Mitzvah for boys and Bat Mitzvah for girls. The literal meaning of these terms is "son or daughter of the law." This implication is that as the child matures, he or she becomes more responsible and accountable to make proper choices and decisions. For boys this timing was upon the completion of the twelfth year and for girls that was the beginning of the twelfth year. We see from Luke's account that Jesus was twelve years old (and would have been in his thirteenth year) that He made the journey to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary for the Passover observance since He was then considered to be old enough to observe the requirements of the law.

Some commentators think that this was His first trip to Jerusalem (since He was forty-one days old) even though His parents went every year. Going up to Jerusalem from Nazareth was a seventy-five-mile journey which would have been difficult for small children (and their parents). Since this was probably His first trip to "the big city" he was likely impressed with all the magnificent buildings and especially the Temple in the heart of the city. In addition to these impressive sights, there were myriads of people. The New Bible Commentary states that the city's population would have ballooned from its normal 25,000 to more than 100,000 people because of the Passover crowds. (Estimates of the population of Jerusalem during this time vary widely from a high of 250,000 to a low of 20,000). The entire celebration would have included not only the observance of the Passover meal but there would have been seven more days of the Unleavened Bread ceremonies.

After the eighth day, all the pilgrims headed for home – well, almost all. It turned out that Jesus was so occupied with the many new things and all the events in and around the Temple that He asked a lot of questions and, consequently, missed the departure of the caravan of people going back to Galilee. Luke related that the group had traveled a day's journey before Mary and Joseph realized that He was not with them. Mary probably assumed that Jesus was with the men (since he was now in His thirteenth year), and Joseph probably assumed that Jesus was with the women or the children. Both were wrong.

Panic time in the family! There is no way to imagine all the things they thought about when they concluded that Jesus had been left behind. The total time He was missing was likely three days. The statement of "after three days" probably means that the first day was when they left Jerusalem and then realized that Jesus was not with them. The second day was when they returned to Jerusalem and the third day was spent looking around the area and then finding Jesus in the Temple.

A major part of the education of children in that culture was introducing them to the Scriptures. We are confident that Jesus was familiar with many of the Old Testament passages. When He visited Jerusalem and saw the Temple, He may have remembered the words of Psalms 27:4 which reads "One [thing] I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple." This was a priority in the life of David and Jesus saw an opportunity to "inquire in His temple" as He beheld all the beautiful things that adorned the dwelling place of God.

We are not told how the conversation with the religious leader began. We can speculate that Jesus initiated the interaction by asking a question (inquiring in His temple) of one of the priests or teachers of the law. With His relatively new status of moving from "childhood" to that

of being a “son of the law,” he would have had many questions of the expectations and implications of this stage of maturity. Was He at this time “omniscient” or was He in the early stages of developing His consciousness of “Sonship” relative to God the Father? Various commentaries give opinions that advocate a wide range of ideas of when did Jesus the boy/man know all these things and realized that He was the Messiah.

The uniqueness of Jesus was already there and began to reveal itself in this encounter with the teachers of the law. My guess is that His questions were so profound and His responses to their answers were so “out of the ordinary” that the first teachers were totally amazed and called other rabbis over to listen in on the conversation.

Did these conversations go on over the three-day period when He was separated from Joseph and Mary or was it just part of the time? There are many curiosity questions to which we aren’t privy to the answers: where did He sleep at night and who provided food for Him during this time?

Questioned – 2:48-50

⁴⁸ When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” ⁴⁹ And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. Luke 2:48–50 (NASB95)

The initial reaction of Mary and Joseph was total surprise since what they saw was not what they had imagined would be the situation when they found Him. The Greek word Luke used for “Son” is *teknon* which is normally used in reference to a male child as opposed to a more matured male. That Greek word would have been *huios*. This subtle difference may be a clue to the fact that Mary was still thinking of Jesus as a little child rather than a young adult. Not only was Jesus making a maturing transition in His life, but Mary and Joseph would be undergoing a transition in their thinking with regard to Jesus as He grew older.

There are other subtle messages in the conversation that followed. Mary’s statement that “Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You” was an acknowledgment that Joseph (your father) had faithfully carried out his parental responsibilities and provided for Jesus since His birth. Joseph probably had not forgotten that Mary was already with Child while they were still in the betrothal phase of their relationship. Mary was also sending a message to Jesus that both she and Joseph still had a deep sense of responsibility for His well-being even though He was beginning the adolescent years of His maturation.

The subtle messages not only came from Mary, but Jesus was somewhat subtle in His questions to them. He was obviously developing an awareness of the unique relationship He had with His divinity which is evident in the second part of His question regarding “being about the things of His Father.” That statement could be considered to be a signal to Mary and Joseph that He was putting the relationship with the Heavenly Father as a first priority in His life.

We pick up this “priority” message in the subtle insertion of the word “must” (had to, of necessity) that Jesus included in His question to His earthly parents. When we consider such a situation for our own lives, we might do well to examine the “must” or “necessary” things with which we are faced. We may find many things that fit into this category and then we are faced with deciding which of these “must” are the top priorities. These priorities can certainly change relative positions in the list of “have to” duties. Maturity and other relationships are factors that will influence which of the “must” winds up at the top of the list.

While a developing sense of “Sonship” with the Heavenly Father was impacting the priorities in Jesus’ life, we should also be aware of that relationship in our own lives when we

have been born of the Spirit of God. When we have been born again, then our priorities will drastically change. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” We should also note Paul’s comment on the “necessities” with which we are confronted in our “new creation” situation. A few verses prior to 5:17, he wrote “the love of Christ constrains or compels us.” We could apply this same word (compel) to what Jesus said to Mary and Joseph “Did you not know that I am compelled to be about the affairs of My Father?”

The first part of His question (why were you searching?) could have been His way of saying “I’m really surprised that you didn’t know where I would be.” That would raise a question if whether Mary and Joseph had seen any prior behavior in Jesus that would have given them a hint that such maturity was developing in Him that would have suggested that the most likely place to find Him would be the house of God. Alexander MacLaren suggested that Jesus’ question should cause us to ask this same question about ourselves. In other words, if someone were looking for us, where would they expect to find us? Would we be going about the affairs of the Heavenly Father or be in the Father’s house because we were compelled to be or would we be “out and about” carrying our own agenda?

All of us can identify with the situation in which Mary and Joseph found themselves in that they “did not fully understand the implications and meaning” of all they had just experienced and heard.

Obedient – 2:51-52

⁵¹ And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:51–52 (NASB95)

The “musts” in the life of Jesus were many and varied. Some of these compelling constraints involved activities in His earthly ministry which began at age thirty. We are familiar with some of these such as “I must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things,” “I must preach the kingdom of God in other cities,” and “I must work the works of the One Who sent Me.” There was also another “must” that He followed and that was the constraint of family relationships that was high on His priority list up until He was thirty years old.

As Jesus continued in the maturity process His associations with His earthly family were conducted in a right and proper way. The statement that He continued in subjection of his earthly parents was not done because of external pressures but because an internal inclination that came from the heart of one who was their child. Just as He practiced this submission to Mary and Joseph, He continue in such a relationship to His Heavenly Father as is evidenced in His statement (John 8:29) “for I always do those things that please Him.”

Once again, we see the statement that Mary remembered and treasured the experiences that came about because God had chosen her to give birth to and be the mother of the Holy Child. Many think that these memories were shared with Luke as he compiled the accounts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth and incorporated details that only Mary could have known.

All we are told in the gospel accounts about the eighteen years of Jesus’ life between the Temple encounter and the start of His ministry to proclaim salvation of mankind is summed up in these final two verses. He grew up and matured both physically and spiritually. This should certainly be true in our lives, also.