

Parental Care And Authority.

Text: Luke 2:41-52

1) Parental Care

Suggested Hymns:

2) Parental Authority

610, 621, 171 R&S, 286, 588

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 2:41–52, ⁴¹ *His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.* ⁴² *And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.* ⁴³ *When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances.*

⁴⁵ *So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.* ⁴⁶ *Now so it was that 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 astonished at His understanding and answers.*

⁴⁸ *So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."* ⁴⁹ *And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"* ⁵⁰ *But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.* ⁵¹ *Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.* ⁵² *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The visit of Jesus to Jerusalem at the age of twelve years is the only incident recorded of the time of His boyhood. Beside the remark that He was subject to His parents and that He increased in wisdom and stature, and in

favour with God and man, nothing more is said of Him until, at the age of thirty years, when He comes to John the Baptist and is baptised in the river Jordan.

Had anything remarkable occurred within this long period, had Jesus done anything to show that He is the Son of God and Saviour of the world, had He performed a miracle for instance, St. Luke would probably have mentioned it in his Gospel.

Luke is the only Evangelist who tells particulars of Jesus' infancy and boyhood, and he seems to have his information from Jesus' mother, Mary, of whom he distinctly says at different occasions that she kept these things in her heart.

Had Jesus in any way manifested His divinity, Mary, undoubtedly, would have told Luke, so that he might put it down in his book for future generations.

We are expressly told that at the marriage at Cana in Galilee He performed His first miracle, turning water into wine. The only time when rays of divine glory shone forth from the Son of man in the days of His youth was when, at the age of twelve years, He was in the temple of Jerusalem.

There He sat, the tender youth, in the midst of the doctors, that is, the men who had grown up in the study of the Scriptures, who were the teachers of the people, and were looked upon as authorities in religious matters.

He converses with these highly educated men, He asks them and answers them, and behold, such is the understanding and such are the answers of the boy of Galilee, that the doctors do not know what to make of it. They are amazed. They had never seen and heard the like.

And the same amazement comes upon Mary and Joseph when He says to them, ***“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”*** Here the rays of His divine glory are darting forth from the Son of God, and He gently reminds His parents of the fact that He is the eternal Son of the Father, a fact which they well knew, but did not bear in mind when they addressed Him.

A special feature, however, of our Gospel is, that it contains an important lesson for parents. It tells in what manner parents should care for their children and exercise their authority over them. This, then, shall be the subject of our

meditation, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *Parental Care And Authority*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Parental Care

Parents do not need to be told that they must attend to their children in earthly things. They know that. It is implanted by nature. Even the animals instinctively take care of their young, feed them, and protect them, until they can take care of themselves.

Parents loving their children will do for them all they can that they might be happy and become useful members of the human family. They will, above all earthly things, give them a good education. For all the inheritance which they may leave to their children cannot outweigh a good education. Success and happiness depends to a great extent on education.

There is one thing, however, which stands even above earthly education, and that is the welfare of the child's immortal soul.

If parents are required to look to the mortal bodies of their children, how much more to their immortal souls! In this respect the parents of Jesus serve as an example.

Of them we read: ⁴¹ *His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.*” Mary and Joseph were a pious couple, they walked in the fear of God, they observed the commandments of the Lord, and thereby they set a good example to the child that was entrusted to them.

Parents, know that your children will learn more by the example you give them in your daily lives than by anything else. Live Christianity before their eyes, and they will learn Christianity. If sincerely you walk in the fear of God, your children will be implanted with the spirit of godliness, and, in this way you will extend to them the proper care for their souls.

Moreover, the parents of Jesus did not neglect the religious training of their child. They did not content themselves with the good example, but led Jesus to do as they did. We read, ⁴² *And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.* ⁴³ *When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it.*”

So they took the child Jesus along with them to Jerusalem and had Him worship with them in the temple. Parents should teach their children to pray and worship the Lord, and should urge them and influence them to walk in the ways of the Lord as long as they live.

Here is where some parents make a serious mistake. They hold to the principle that their children should form their own judgement as to the religion which they want to embrace. They say, *'I do not want to make a hypocrite of my child; I have my children baptised and confirmed, and after that they must make use of their own judgement; if they do not care for the church, I cannot help it.'* That is a wrong principle.

God demands of you that you should bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That is an express command of God. Not only should we bestow special care upon the immortal souls of our children in the days of their infancy and childhood.

The Parents should have them baptised, and teach them to pray at home, and send them to a Christian school provided it teaches the Word of God faithfully. Parents should attend to their spiritual needs and have them thoroughly instructed in the true faith, until they are confirmed.

But after their Confirmation, when they enter the wicked world, when they come in contact with all sorts of people, when they are being tempted by the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh more than before, then, O parents, this is the time that we must bestow special care on our children that they should remain true to God, so that our work upon them in the days of infancy and childhood are not in vain.

Of course, we cannot force our children to believe. Faith is God's work. But we can and should lead, exhort, and admonish them to make diligent use of the means of grace by which faith is produced and sustained. We can and should teach them, show them, admonish them, and warn them. And this we should do as long as we live, even when our children have left the shelter of the parental roof.

Parents should be watchful also that their children do not get into bad company and associate with people who will harm their souls. We read, ⁴⁴ *but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and*

sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.”

When the Israelites went to a feast in Jerusalem from remoter cities and towns, they always went in large groups. Such a group had been made up at Nazareth. Kinsmen and acquaintances usually kept together, and that was the company to which Jesus kept Himself. His parents knew that they could safely entrust Him to that company, and so they were not disturbed when they did not see Him when they left Jerusalem.

But when the group halted and preparations were being made to camp for the night, they missed their boy and hastened back to Jerusalem. Now, as the parents of Jesus watched over their child, how much the more should all parents keep watch over their children and see that they do not get into bad company!

Jesus' parents knew that their boy would do no wrong. But how is it with our children? How easily are they misled! How easily do they fall prey to the temptations with which they are being beset!

Indeed, Christian parents cannot be careful enough about the company of their children. They should not let their children associate with everybody that comes along. They should make sure of it that the good seed which they have sown in their children's hearts be not trodden down, and not permit them to make friends with such as seduce them into sin and evil. This is the care which parents should bestow on their children.

2. Parental Authority.

Our Gospel contains a lesson on parental authority also. We read, ⁴⁶ *Now so it was that 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 astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”*

These words of Mary were evidently meant for a rebuke. They cannot be explained in any other way. The poor mother had worried over her lost child, and had suffered a great deal for three days. And now that she finds Him at last,

she lets Him know that she is His mother and censures Him for all the grief and sorrow she had to bear on His account.

This censure would have been in the right place, if Jesus had done wrong and had not been the Son of God. As the Son of God He had to be about His Father's business, and His mother's authority did not exceed the authority of His heavenly Father.

It is quite a different thing with other parents. God Himself has established the authority of parents over their children. When God says, "*Honour your father and your mother,*" this implies that your father and mother are your superiors, that they stand above you, and that you must obey them.

Parents, therefore, do perfectly right when they rebuke and censure their children for the wrongs which they do, and when they punish them for their wickedness. They must do that. They are commanded to do it.

Does not God say in Proverbs 23:13-14, ¹³ *Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.* ¹⁴ *You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell?* In our days there is a growing sentiment among parents to let the children have their own way, not to punish them for their wrongs, and simply to tell them that it is for their own detriment if they do wrong.

Children brought up in that way soon trample upon their parents and do what they please, irrespective of anybody. Parents who really love their children will and must exercise their authority and make their children understand that they must obey.

They will shape the characters of their children and train them to be good men and women in future years. They will bend the tree while it is young, so that it might grow up to the joy and to the delight of others.

And as the parents should exercise their authority, so the children are required to submit to this parental authority. We see this in the example of Jesus, of whom the end of our Gospel says, "⁵¹ *Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.* ⁵² *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.*"

The heavenly Child, the Son of God, was subject to His earthly parents, that is, He submitted to their authority. Though He was God, and, therefore, stood above them, He did not make use of His divine authority, He did not exhibit Himself as their superior. No, He obeyed, that in all things He might be like as we are.

What a fine example for children! If the eternal Son of God obeyed His earthly parents, He who was not subject to anybody, how much the more should Christian children walk in obedience, and do all they can to serve their parents!

Children, you can never repay your father and mother for what they did for you. The sleepless nights, the care and worry, the attention paid to your mortal bodies and to your immortal souls, these are things for which you can never give your parents an adequate compensation.

Obey your parents, then; hold them in love and esteem as long as they live. A Christian child, even when already advanced in years, will not undertake an important step without consulting the parents and seeking their advice.

And if thus you honour your father and mother, you will not only inherit the promise of the fourth commandment that you shall live long upon the earth, but you will increase also, as Jesus did, in favour with God and man. Both God and men are pleased with a child who shows obedience to the parents.

Finally, my friends, can we parents say that we always did our duty to the children whom God entrusted to our care? And can the children say that they always obeyed their parents? No; in this respect, also, we must admit that we are sinners.

Let us look for forgiveness to Jesus who became man for us, was a child for us, lived upon this earth for us, and died on the cross for our salvation. Scripture says in 1 John 1:7 that *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*, and in Romans 6:4, *that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*. So let us look to Jesus Christ for strength, and He will enable us to walk in His commandments to the glory of His holy name. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.