

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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THE PARENTING DYNAMIC OF MARY AND JOSEPH

Luke 2:41-52

October 28, 2018

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The title of my message today is “The Parenting Dynamic of Mary and Joseph”, and I’ll be reading from Luke 2:41-52. I have three points:

- For Mary and Joseph, tradition was important
- Mary and Joseph trusted other people with Jesus’ rearing
- Mary and Joseph observed their son own his faith for himself
- Mary and Joseph demonstrate the effort behind parenting

INTRODUCTION: Today we have lots of definitions of marriage and families. There is advice around every corner about how to raise kids. People who have nothing better to do might find themselves watching a Jerry Springer episode and seeing how absurdly broken much of our society is. Or one can change the channel to Judge Judy, Dr. Phil, or some other show and see even more of the mess. I don’t even know if those shows are still on, and I couldn’t care less, really. Honestly, I get enough entertainment as your pastor!

I am certain most of you have strong opinions about parenting – you may have strong opinions about the family you grew up in, the kids you are currently raising, or the kids you raised. If you aren’t married, or if you never had kids, I am quite certain you still have strong opinions about families. If you have adult children, you probably wish you could go back and do some things differently.

Today I will read all my scripture up front.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:41-52

Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover.⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.

⁴³ After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”

⁴⁹ “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

FOR MARY AND JOSEPH, TRADITION WAS IMPORTANT

EXPLANATION: Verse 41 tells us Mary and Joseph when to the festival according to the custom. And they included their family. They went every year, and we have the narrative about what happened the year Jesus was twelve years old.

ILLUSTRATION: I read about a family that had suffered a terrible loss. An older couple had a family tradition. It was a simple tradition, nevertheless it had become part of the family. When this couple’s kids were little, their mother baked a certain kind of cookie to begin the holiday season. No decorations were put up... nothing happened until she baked the cookies. As the kids got older, they continued the family tradition. It became a family staple. Mom got out her recipe book and ingredients, baked the cookies, and in a few minutes, she took them out of the oven and put them on a tray for all to enjoy. As the kids got older and left home, the tradition was that everyone would come together while mom baked the cookies once again.

The mother grew older, became ill, and died. When the season came around, the family all gathered at their father's home. The family was very sad and quiet. Things just weren't the same. You know what I am talking about. You've experienced it. The family heard a loud groan come from the kitchen. It was the groan of grief. Their dad took the tray of cookies out of the oven and brought them to the family. He'd never made them before and even though he was grief-stricken, he was still grateful for the family around him.

APPLICATION: I told you that to remind you that life is fragile. Family is fragile. Do what you can to preserve the warm family traditions.

If you have family traditions that bring people together, keep doing them. If you are getting older it's possible that tradition might die with you, so make sure you are grooming the next matriarch or patriarch to take over some day.

MARY AND JOSEPH TRUSTED OTHER PEOPLE WITH JESUS' REARING

EXPLANATION: This might sound like an odd point to you but it's there. Look at the scripture and read between the lines. Had they been traveling alone, they would have known Jesus was missing, but they assumed he was with the group somewhere. We know that Jesus had brothers, and along with all the people who traveled to the festival, there must have been many children. They didn't worry about it. Surely, he was somewhere in the group. We can tell from this part of the story and Mary and Joseph had a high trust level of the adults around their kids.

They traveled for a day then noticed he wasn't there. After the end of a long day they settled in family groups and learned that one was missing, so they went around looking for him. It would have taken a day to get back to Jerusalem. Then they searched for him for three days. I wonder, did they take their other kids, or did they let the others take them back to Jerusalem? It would have been a hard journey with kids while looking for one who was missing. We really don't know.

APPLICATION: Yes, society is different than it used to be. It's not safe to let others rear your kids. It's not safe traveling without accounting for your kids, but

it's important for your kids to learn from people besides just you. As parents, Susan and I know that what our kids need to survive in this world is more than we know, and we included other trustworthy adults along the way. If our kids had only learned from us, their perspectives, knowledge, and abilities would be very limited.

ILLUSTRATION: A few years ago, I knew a man who was nice but very controlling. His kids, as far as I could tell, were not rebellious. They were nice and compliant. But something was odd about his level of control over his wife and kids. A group of us went on a church trip. When we got to our destination, it was clear the man was tired, and I suggested he and his wife rest while I walked around the small town with his teenage kids and others. He said OK.

We had walked only a few minutes when one of them said to the other, "Should we tell him?" They went on to tell me this was only the third or fourth time in their entire lives they had been away from their parents. I didn't know what to think. But I know this... the level of their father's control and his mistrust of everyone and everything had planted a seed of resentment in those kids. You may wonder whatever happened to them. One of them got older and went to visit a friend who lived far away. He called home and told his parents he wasn't returning. He had a taste of freedom and wasn't going back.

ILLUSTRATION: Our good friend, Bill Choate, has worked with college students his entire career. He could probably run for governor and win just because of all the people he knows. Anyway, Bill says it's true that kids will return home if you let them go at the right time.

MARY AND JOSEPH OBSERVED THEIR SON OWN HIS FAITH FOR HIMSELF

After searching for three days, Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple courts, listening and teaching. They were astonished, the scripture says. The age of twelve was when a boy became a man according to Jewish tradition. And here was this young man listening, asking questions, and dialoguing with people in the temple.

What were they astonished about? That's interesting to me. Was it because of what he was doing or saying? They had raised him in a family of strong Jewish faith. They knew he was the Son of God... I mean they really knew. Mary knew Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and I am sure Joseph never forgot the angel who appeared to him and explained it all.

They observed their own son become a man, their own son asking questions and dialoguing with people in the temple.

APPLICATION: If you have children, or grandchildren, or have influence over children, help your Christian beliefs become *their* Christian beliefs.

MARY AND JOSEPH DEMONSTRATE THE EFFORT BEHIND PARENTING

ILLUSTRATION: A few months ago, I gave a college student a ride to the airport. He was going home for just a few days. As I listened to him, I learned how scattered his family was, yet he talked about them like they lived together. I appreciated how he spoke about his family members with admiration. I asked him the secret to staying close. He thought for a second and said, "Effort." I told my kids what the young man had said.

APPLICATION: Years ago, the effort to stay in touch with family who lived far apart was expensive and inconvenient. Do any of you remember long distance phone bills? Some of you remember the effort to make a phone call. It's almost humorous to think about calling an operator and getting connections all the way to the west coast and then waiting a few minutes for all those connections to be made.

Do any of you remember how expensive it used to be to fly? It's still not cheap but it's not nearly as expensive as it used to be. And since flying was expensive, we rode Greyhound or Trailways buses. And some of you rode trains. Before email, we had to write letters or send expensive telegrams. Not anymore. Today it's convenient and cheap to keep in touch, yet in most cases, we are not any closer to our families than when we had to do it the old, inconvenient, and expensive ways.

CONCLUSION: Mary and Joseph show us the effort behind parenting. What a responsibility raising Jesus! They were raising the Christ Child. Making sure he was nourished. Making sure they were teaching him according to custom.

What we need in this world today is good, strong, Christian parents. Good, strong, Christian families. When the family falls apart, the nation falls apart. When families are healed, this nation will be healed. I know it's easy to say, but it's difficult to accomplish. God give us strong families.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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