

Sermon on Luke 2:39-52 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Luke 2:39-52

Jesus is human so we can be too.

As I was preparing this week I came across a brief article written by Macy Williams in 2015 on Business Insider... It was about the wisdom of her 12-year-old brother.

“My little brother Mac is freakishly wise. I don't know if it's because he's a much younger kid hanging around lots of adults or he's just an old soul, but the seventh grader can drop major knowledge... Every so often we'll be sitting around the dinner table or watching TV and he'll blurt out some sagacious comment that will make my jaw drop... Sometimes I believe that kids really are more enlightened than adults. Their curiosity of the world and blatant honesty are refreshing.”

Before Mac hit his teen years, she compiled 22 life lessons from her 12-year-old brother. Some really insightful:

- Don't lie about doing your homework; just do it.
- Never eat too much candy. It feels good while you're eating it, but it feels bad later.
- If you are always there for your family, they will always be there for you.
- Be proud to wear your glasses if you have them. It might just be the reason someone remembers your face.
- When arguing with your parents, give up. You will never win.
- When you get money, don't buy the first thing you see. Look around.
- Don't let a video game ruin a friendship.
- Laughter is a good way to make someone feel better.
- Don't let your friends take advantage of you, and don't take advantage of your friends.
- Girls don't need to wear all that makeup; they look pretty good the way they are.
- You don't have to use social media to have friends. I have plenty of friends and I have never touched Instagram.
- Be a lover, not a fighter.

We can learn a lot from 12-year-olds, from kids of all ages, if we take the time to listen and be around them.

Even in studying the way of Jesus, there is something to learn from this adolescent in our text for today. If we have ears to hear it and eyes to see it!

This is the only place in the Gospels that we get a glimpse into the life of Jesus before his ministry. And it highlights his family's piety and his hunger for the "things of the Father."

Every year his parents would make the journey to Jerusalem from Nazareth for the Passover feast. It is a whole family affair as they are in a traveling party with a bunch of people. Can you imagine the excitement of this yearly journey? Jerusalem increased its population by some 200,000 for the week of Passover, there was commotion, excitement, public prayer, and the participation in sacrificing a lamb and telling the story of God's redeeming Israel out of Egypt.

For a 12-year-old... either having experienced or anticipating his Bar Mitzvah (religious adulthood), the participation in these things is significant. And we find Jesus where he has come to understand he belongs. In the temple sitting among the teachers listening and asking questions.

There is this "Home Alone" moment in the story with a return visit and searching for the boy. And Mary cherished or "kept these things in her heart" so that we could hear them. A boy growing up, confounding his parents!

This is not the first, or last, place we encounter Jesus' humanity, but it is a pivotal point of life (a coming of age story of sorts) that should encourage and spur us on to life.

Humanity of Christ

There are two verses that bookend this story.

"The boy grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him." -- **Luke 2:40** (CSB)

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.” -- **Luke 2:52** (CSB)

Charis... used twice, as grace and as favor.

Jesus growing up, and we witness an awakening of purpose in him.

“Didn’t you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father’s house?”

He is obedient to his parents but will continue to grow up into being about his Father’s business.

And he does so first by coming to earth and assuming human nature.

There is depth to this that we can’t fully mine today, but being fully God and fully human is significant both in theological categories but also in forming how we live in his way.

We usually “get” the divinity of Christ, we know he is God and that is what sets Christianity apart from other religions, what makes it unique. But do we get the visceral reality of his humanity?

Contentious throughout early church history. But our Savior is both fully God and fully human and that is good news.

“When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” -- **Galatians 4:4-5** (CSB)

“Only humans are born under the law, and only a human being could redeem other human beings born under the same law. Born under the law of God, all humans are guilty of transgressing that law. Only a perfect human—Jesus Christ—could perfectly keep the law and perfectly fulfill the law, thereby redeeming us from that guilt.”

“The blood of animals, although acceptable on a temporary basis as a foreshadowing of the blood of the perfect God-Man, was insufficient for the permanent remission of sin because “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and

goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, sacrificed His human life and shed His human blood to cover the sins of all who would ever believe in Him. If He were not human, this would have been impossible.”

And maybe most importantly, Jesus in his humanity can relate to us, to our experience.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.” -- **Hebrews 4:15** (CSB)

“In His humanity, Jesus was subjected to all the same kinds of trials and regular experiences that we are, and He is, therefore, able to sympathize with us and to aid us. He was tempted; He was persecuted; He was poor; He was despised; He suffered physical pain; and He endured the sorrows of a lingering and most cruel death. Only a human being could experience these things, and only a human being could fully understand them through experience.”

“It is ever to us the richest and highest comfort, as believers in Christ, that the Lord Jesus is a man; and when he strengthens us it is full often by laying his human hand upon us. He reveals his kinship with us, and our spirit is consoled and strengthened by a sense of his union with us. [We then can] draw water from the ancient well of our Lord’s humanity.” **Charles Spurgeon**

While we most often go to his temptation to see how Jesus shares our experience - here we have adolescence as proof. He grew up. He had parents and siblings. He had to learn. It is not just the battle against sin as the experience Jesus shares with us. It is all of the human experience.

“We shift in our seats uncomfortably. If God became human—if he’s really, truly here—what does that mean for us? The second person of the Trinity became small. A more spacious life is not to be gained by becoming bigger or by spreading out more thinly; it’s by following the way of Jesus. We too must reckon with our smallness.” Ashley Hales, *A Spacious Life*

As a child he had to learn that two plus two equals four, and as a twelve-year-old he was still learning about every part of life—including faith and relationships.

For those of us still learning those things, it is a great encouragement that he did too.

“As it is, his human experience is such as to guarantee that in every moment of demand and pressure in our relationship and walk with God we may go to him, confident that in some sense he has been there before us and so is the helper we need... the Son of God lived his divine-human life in and through his human mind and body at every point, maximizing his identification and empathy with those he had come to save...” **J.I. Packer**

So Jesus is about his Father’s business by being human, fully human. And through that experience, he does his Father’s business through his perfect life. His family duty lived out. His patience. Self-denial. Humility. Boldness. Prayerfulness.

This life meets then two purposes; justifying and giving righteousness to those that believe, his body given for us... and to give the perfect pattern for imitation.

The New Testament is full of invitations to be imitators of Jesus. In taking up our crosses, in giving ourselves away... but I wonder if what we can imitate Jesus as a boy is to be human!

Now, I know you can’t help it, you are human. But in the church we are so accustomed to compartmentalize life. We have our religious life, our work life, our family life, our life of play. The way of Jesus though is an integrated life where all these go together.

In Christ, we are free to live more human. To cast off the restraints of earning, of shame, of sin. And to experience all of the beauty and complexity that humanity entails.

When we get it right, when we really live the way of Jesus, we can flourish living in ways that will drive some people crazy. That to some might look like a waste.

“Waste your life on poetry. Waste your life shoveling snow. Waste your life watching birds and playing board games. Throw your fear of being "left behind" into Gehenna where it belongs. Waste your life praying "Give me an eagerness for your laws rather than a love for money!" (Psalm 119:36) Waste your life

imagining just how completely forgiven the world is and then act accordingly. Waste your life turning abstractions of blessedness into concrete realities. The inheritance of the meek is not a theory. It is, in reality, the whole earth... Waste your life confessing sin which may or may not belong to you and waste your life making amends if you're able. Waste your life by agreeing quickly with your "enemy". Waste your life believing that each individual person has probably suffered more than they ever should have and then refrain from adding your condescension to their burden. Waste your life getting busted for being too merciful. Waste your life reading all the hate mail you will receive for proclaiming undiluted mercy! Waste your life in the holy pursuit of a bad reputation. Let befriending sinners be to your detriment and God's glory. Waste your life on a new aesthetic, where the paths already taken aren't bulldozed but they are reconsidered. Waste your life living among those whose lives cannot be solved. People are not the projects of your ministry. But waste your life living in such a way that even the ones most disfigured by this hostile world can actually feel a reason to glorify God. Waste your life speaking precious words that transfigure the unloved into the beloved. Waste your efforts on hopeless causes. Waste your life staying when it's too hard to stay. Waste your life believing God. Waste your life on the paradox of God, totally giving up and never ever giving up at the exact same time. Waste your life praying in tongues, expecting miracles, and yielding to God's Mighty Plan.” **Andy Squyres**

Why didn't Jesus just get on with it when born? Subdue the earth, reckon with sin and blatant stupidity of his people? Why did he waste time growing up, serving his family, making journeys to Jerusalem, playing with friends, going to wedding parties...

We can take comfort that Jesus chose to be a 12-year-old, to grow up, to become strong, filled with wisdom and God's grace; and rejoice in our humanity, the limits of it and the gifts of it. And in doing so we might find we are beginning to walk in the way of Jesus

Jesus is a human so that we can be too.

There is something else here for disciples of Jesus.

Grow Up Together

Jesus in the temple with the teachers is not normal. This is out of the ordinary. Astounding them with his understanding.

I wonder if this informed his teaching in his ministry in answering a question about the greatest in the kingdom of heaven...

“He called a small child and had him stand among them. 3 “Truly I tell you,” he said, “unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child — this one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one child like this in my name welcomes me.” -- **Matthew 18:2-5** (CSB)

Don't despise youth.

The church in our day has neglected young people. So often we extend childcare ministries into the teen years separating them from the life of the church. Where there should be discipleship, mutual learning, teaching, opportunities for questions, and the up-close witnessing of lives lived in Christ, we have too often settled for games and distraction. And when we do, we miss the way of Jesus.

Thursday I saw a video of Nick Willis, a 38-year-old New Zealander and elite runner. For 19 years in a row he ran a sub-four-minute mile and on New Year's morning he made an attempt for a 20th. His strategy, rather than running alone, was to stride alongside two pacers who were both in their teens.

Many of you know that I am a slow runner. Like extremely slow. But my son is not. And on occasion we run together. I might be able to outlast him, and I probably slow him down quite a bit, but when we run together it requires me to be on my game. We push each other, we learn from each other, we enjoy each other.

As it is with the race we run following Jesus.

“If students can understand algebra, chemistry, geometry, biology, literature, physics, history, they can also understand depravity, Christology, justification, repentance, faith, sanctification, great commission... don't hold back the young minds that God created to muse upon His greatness!” **Shane Pruitt**

Seeing Jesus as a kid might just help us see the next generations differently. We want to be a church for the forgotten or invisible among us. Those with disabilities, youth.

Don't think you can't learn from the least among us.

The child with autism might teach you about presence and quietness, and even joy.

The child who can't walk on their own might teach you a lot about both independence and dependence.

The teenager can teach you about pursuing things with abandon. The middle-schooler can teach you about curiosity. And all of them can teach you what it means to meet Jesus with childlike faith.

Step up to disciple our children and young people. Not only for their sake but your own. Don't despise youth.

Don't despise your youth.

Imitation of Jesus is being about the Father's gracious business. My desire for our youth is that Jesus would be your all. The most important thing about your life.

There are a lot of things that will try to distract you but you can push back against them. Engage. Ask. Serve. Commit.

That you would increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.

Each day I attempt to read a Proverb... this collection of wise counsel for life and flourishing. In its historical context it is essentially a book for middle-schoolers. As I read I think a good question might be how can I teach these truths to tweenagers and how might they teach me?

The way of Jesus reveals to us that we can learn from 12-year-olds. It might just make us more human. More hungry for our Savior and his fame.

Jesus is human so we can be too. Shall we be human together?