

Our Father's Business

Luke 2:45-52 Sunday, June 11, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction Our sermon today is called, "Our Father's Business" and while I do not presume to exhaust the subject in one little sermon, I'd like to share some of what it does, and does not, involve. First a story about someone who has the wrong idea about the Father's business.

- Son-in-law joins the family business

A successful businessman sat down with his new son-in-law to discuss his role in the family business. He said to him, "I love my daughter, and now I welcome you into the family. To show you how much I care, I've made you a 50-50 partner in my business. All you have to do is go to the factory every day and learn how everything works." The son-in-law said, "That's very kind of you but I hate factories. I can't stand the noise." "Oh, I see," said the father-in-law. "In that case, you can work in the office and take charge of some of the operations there." "That's very kind of you but I hate office work too," said the son-in-law. "I can't stand being stuck behind a desk in an office all day, every day." At this point the father-in-law was getting a little annoyed and said "I just made you half-owner of a huge money-making organization, but you don't like factories and you won't work in an office. What am I going to do with you?" "Easy," said the son-in-law. "Buy me out."* That was the wrong attitude. Let's look at this text to discern a better response.

- Set the Stage

Tabernacles, Pentecost, Passover

Luke 2 records a significant event in the life of Jesus. He came to participate in Passover as a twelve year old. It was at twelve that a young man became a "son of the Law" and was expected to observe it, including the three feasts that all men were to observe; Tabernacles, Pentecost and Passover. Tabernacles emphasizes the importance of taking time for the eternal and the spiritual and not be obsessed with this world. Pentecost reminds us that we can do nothing without the Holy Spirit. Passover reminds us of our covenant of salvation with God, fulfilled in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus.

My Father's ?

People often came to these feasts in caravans, with women and children first and then the men. It would have been very easy to assume Jesus was with one parent or the other, or with friends. But as they returned home, Jesus lingered in Jerusalem for several days before His parents realized that He was not in the caravan and had to return to Jerusalem to search for Him. When they found Him, He was among the teachers of the Temple, conversing and asking questions. All were astonished at His wisdom. His parents were astonished that He would put them through so much stress. When confronted, He gives a strange answer: "I must be about My Father's business." Yet He returned to Nazareth and was subject to them as His parents. So what is His Father's business? Should it be our business as well?

- Main Point:

Worship, Understanding, Respect for authority

I think, looking at this passage, that the Father's business includes worship (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles), understanding and respect. Of the three, worship takes priority but all are

important. Now as a young man, Jesus takes on the responsibility of being a man of the Law, and observing the feasts, three of the most important ones being Tabernacles, Pentecost and Passover, all observed by devout Jews today. The feast of Tabernacles this year runs from September 29 through October 6. Pentecost and Passover have already passed by. Tabernacles involves moving into a tent or some temporary structure, leaving behind the things of this world, including electronic things, and focusing on the Lord and on family for a week. It reminds us not to be so enamored of this world that we make no preparation for the next. Pentecost reminds us that we need the Holy Spirit to live the life of one who follows Christ. We have no power on our own. Passover represents our redemption by God's sovereign power, fulfilled fully 21 years later when Jesus Himself died on the cross, and then rose again from the dead.

Worship is vital, as represented by the feasts, but also understanding. Jesus took the time to listen, ask questions and learn. We should never stop following His example. And while Mary and Joseph were probably irritated that Jesus gave them so much consternation, He returned to Nazareth and submitted to their good authority as His parents. Think of it, the eternal Son of God had to problem submitting to proper authority. Beware any spiritual leader who respects no authority but his own, Such as person is not to be trusted.

- Application

Our applications from this text are three: Worship grows deeper and more profound when we take time out of routine to spend on spiritual matters. We should seek wisdom always. We should respect legitimate authority. It is an interesting detail that Jesus does not literally say "I must be about My Father's business. The last word, "business," is inserted by the translators and is appropriate to finish the sentence in good English, but the literal translation is "to be about My Father's" It could be "My Father's courts," or "My Father's Presence" or "My Father's business." It is not far-fetched to imagine that we discern our role in His business in our lives as we spend time in His Presence in worship and prayer. One leads to the other.

- Conclusion

Jesus went about His Father's business, or His Father's Presence, or both. They involve the pursuit of a deep spirituality in worship and prayer. They involved a love of learning and understanding. They involve as respect for authority. There is more to the Father's business, but that, I think, is a good start.

*<https://upjoke.com/family-business-jokes>