

# Responsibility to the Father

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[ 0 : 00 ] I would like, if you would turn back with me, to look chapter 2 to the story that Ketuna read of the boy Jesus in the temple.

The title for this evening's sermon is Responsibility to the Father. We have been looking in Sunday evenings and the identity of then is fair being said following that through.

The theme of a better vision. Really the idea was to inspire, not just our young people, but particularly maybe as they discussed it further, our young people, to greater Christian living, to rising all of our understanding of the gospel to a higher level by recognising the wonder and the amazement and the greatness of our salvation.

We looked initially at the salvation that is being provided itself. We looked at it from the point of view of the Father, the Trinitarian salvation, from the point of view of the Father, and then from the Son and then from the Holy Spirit.

As we looked at that we highlighted the importance of becoming and then being a Christian. Then we looked at a couple of weeks, we looked at a couple of the privileges of being a Christian.

[ 1 : 30 ] We looked at the privilege of freedom in Christ and also the privilege of newness in Christ. We are these two teachings that looked at core and important spiritual truths about what we are as Christians.

We are free in Christ and we are new creations in Jesus Christ. These last two, this evening and then next Sunday evening, we are going to look at the responsibilities that accrue to being a Christian.

Whenever there are privileges, there are also responsibilities, isn't there? We have great privileges, we have a great salvation, we have great privileges of newness and of freedom.

This evening I want to look at the responsibility we have to our Father and next Sunday God willing to look at the responsibility we have to our family.

I have chosen this passage from Luke's Gospel chapter 2, the Boy Jesus at the Temple. Is there anything we can learn from Jesus at age 12?

[ 2 : 36 ] In the sense of paralleling it to our own lives? Well we can always learn from Jesus. The theme that I am looking at this evening is watching Jesus as a child of a Father.

Jesus is here, the child of his heavenly Father. We see him in contact with his Father in the temple here. If you remind yourself from Romans chapter 8 that we are in verse 12, we are obliged not to live according to the sinful nature but if you live according to the sinful nature you will die.

But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body you will live because those who are led by the Spirit of God, our sons of God, our children of God, and it goes on to speak about us, we have been able to cry, Abba, Father.

So there is a real parallel in the Bible between our belief in Jesus Christ and our belonging to him as our God as our Father and we have become the children of God.

Sometimes theologians spoke about Jesus as our elder brother. He is certainly our brother at that level in a unique way and through Christ we become children of God.

[ 3 : 49 ] So it is from that point of view that I want to think for a few minutes about Jesus at 12 years old staying in the temple in his, as he says himself, in his Father's house and what we can learn from that for ourselves and the little bit of teaching that we have in this passage.

And what I want to stress really this evening in terms of responsibility that Jesus recognised that he had a great responsibility to be in the Father's company.

It was also for him a privilege and I hope it is for us too, but he was in the Father's company in verse 49. He says, why are you searching for me? Yes, don't you know I had to be in my Father's house.

He didn't understand what he was saying to them. He was in the Father's company. He was in the Father's house. Now he was young.

He was only 12 years old, but in his society probably he would be regarded as an adult by the age of 13.

[ 4 : 55 ] Manhood came early in these days and he was matured and expected to be mature and take mature and important decisions at the age of about 13.

So he is kind of probably paralleling roughly where you guys are in identity in terms of age, age is about eight or ten years ahead of you in terms of maturity and responsibility.

And that's just the society we live in really isn't it? But again I suppose that's a challenge for us I think probably we live in a society where responsibility for young people is getting later and later and people want to deny responsibility more and more until later and later.

And so the encouragement as Christians is that we take responsibility and recognise not just to be mouth spoon fed in our lives but to take and to learn and to grow.

But anyway that's just an aside because Jesus here he has come up from his home to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and he's done that with his family and probably with most of the community.

[ 6 : 03 ] And that in itself is a hugely significant and it must have been a hugely important and incredibly significant event for Jesus Christ to come to celebrate the Passover which he would later use to inaugurate the Lord's Supper which was inaugurated to remember his death on the cross.

So there must have been even at his early age a great interest in what was happening as he was learning and he was singing coming up to the temple and as he took part in the Passover and as he was with God's people I can imagine he was just loving it.

He was loving being there. He was loving what it stood for. He was loving what it meant. He was loving the questions he could ask and the involvement that he had and the things that he was learning and it became all encompassing for him.

It just filled his vision and filled his thinking. He was in his father's house. He was doing what he had come to do and it was all encompassing.

It's as if he forgot and kind of as it were his temporal life and he is here learning about his father and growing in fellowship with his father so much so that he didn't notice when the community left.

[ 7 : 23 ] Now some people read this passage and say, well how could that possibly happen? How could it possibly happen that Jesus would be left there? What kind of parents did he have? What kind of child was he?

He was rebellious when he spent time in the temple. Well of course it was a society in which they all would have travelled together. Very possibly the men travelled together and then the women separately travelled together and maybe Joseph thought Jesus was with Mary.

Maybe Mary thought Jesus was with Joseph. Maybe they both thought he was just playing with cousins or whatever. They just travelled back together and it would seem really that it was by the end of the first day they recognised something was wrong and Jesus wasn't there.

And so day one was at the end of day one. He wasn't really noticed. He was lost. Day two was spent travelling back to Jerusalem to find him and day three was probably spent anxiously looking for him until they found him in the temple courts and of course his mother was hugely anxious and afraid.

We've been searching for you and he gives this response why? Why? You know? Then you know I had to be in my father's house.

[ 8 : 39 ] And I think that's a key and an important truth for us to remember. Whatever we think of the behaviour of Jesus or of his parents at this and how maybe we can associate with it in our own lives or in our own culture.

And here was Jesus doing what he came to do and was doing what he was humanly born to do but doing what he did from all eternity which was he was coming home.

That's what he was doing. He was coming into the father's company because that's where he had spent eternity and that's where he liked being. He liked being in his father's. He was coming home. Do you remember our studies of Hebrews in the morning?

We've been looking at various truths about the Old Testament coming forward and what the tabernacle was. The tabernacle was God's dwelling with his people in the tabernacle and then in the temple and then in Jesus and then in the Holy Spirit coming and living in our lives.

And it's God with us, isn't it? God with us. That's the whole aim of what Jesus was coming to do. Not only being the father's company but to redeem our people so that they will be in the father's company.

[ 9 : 53 ] They will be in the father's house forever. We're going to sing at the end of the service, Psalm 23, so that I will dwell in God's house forevermore. He was in God's house here.

The earthly kind of temple representative of God's presence and he was being reminded that he was come to redeem our people also to be in God's house, to be in God's company, to be in God's presence.

That's what he was coming to achieve. The essence of his work in our lives as Christians today is that we have the responsibility as believers to seek out and to long for the father's company.

To be with where God is. He was home. That's why he didn't really know what was going on. He was home. And we have this responsibility in our Christian lives as young people and not so young people to recognize that it's Christ has come to give us a longing to be with God, a longing to love God, to desire Him, to worship Him, to serve Him, to follow Him.

The battle we face, we spoke a lot this morning about battle, is with our sinful conflicting desire to be in our own company and to not recognize the Lordship of God and not recognize that He has died on the cross to bring us home.

[ 11 : 19 ] So that we see a responsibility in our Christian lives is to recognize the centrality of a loving relationship with God, with new desires, with new driven choices.

The gospel is for us a gift which changes us and brings us home. It's the whole picture of the prodigal that I mentioned this morning as well, is that the prodigal, the recognition of a sinner is that they realize they are separate from the father and he has come, Christ has come to forgive us and to bring us home into God's company.

And we are in a sense to have a daily prodigal realization that He wants us in His company. He wants us to be home with Him.

He wants us to be in fellowship with Him. He wants us to be His children. That's the responsibility we have to live our lives in His company as young Christians and as old Christians.

The place of forgiveness, the place of grace, the place of hope, the place of a future. But where do you want to be really? Where is it you want to spend your time?

[ 12 : 34 ] Do we have, do you have and do I have this desire to be home in God's company? I don't mean heaven, although I do mean heaven, but I don't mean you all want to go there right now, but because we have heaven here as we are in relationship with God as we are living our lives.

So it is important for us in the same way as Jesus was about His Father in His Father's home that we recognize our need as Christians to make time to be with God.

That's what I'm getting at. That's the responsibility we are to have as young and old people, that it needs to be nurtured. Grace is free, the gospel is free, and love is a great thing, isn't it?

We think of love as a kind of genetic emotion that just wells up within us. It's there, or it's not. And if it's not there, we just say, oh well, it's too bad. It's not there. I can't force myself to love anyone.

But God says we are to nurture and develop our love for Him by being in His company, by deepening our fellowship with Him.

[ 13 : 47 ] It simply, for us, doesn't just happen. For us, we are not like Jesus for whom it was an easy thing to be overwhelmed in the Father's company, in the Father's house.

For us, we work at it because we battle with selfish and sinful desires. We're easily distracted. There's lots of things that will distract us from God's company, from our responsibility to make time to be with God.

Someone told me this week of an interesting book, which I haven't read, like about another 136 interesting books I haven't read. But it's not a Christian book, but it's called *The Shallows* by a guy called Nick Carr.

And it's all about, you'll be surprised about me talking about this, is how the internet is changing our lives and changing the way we think and the way we reason and the way that we read.

And it's making us much less able to concentrate and finding it much easier to be distracted because things change so quickly.

[ 14 : 52 ] We can change everything and what we're thinking about so quickly on the internet. And I think we have to think about that in a relationship with God because our relationship with God takes time and it takes effort and it takes energy that we are making time for God, that we are learning to meditate as young people, learning to understand, learning to prioritize and find time in his company so that we are lost in his company.

In our Father's house, that's our responsibility, giving him the preeminence that he deserves. You know, we look at this passage and think, well, Jesus seemed to be a bit disrespectful here to his family.

Of course, he was perfect and sinless and there was no disrespect. He simply was recognizing his priority, recognizing his calling and recognizing, as it were, just the sheer joy of being in his father's house, his father's company.

There was no disrespect to his human family. He were told very clearly that he went down to Nazareth then with him and was obedient to them and his mother treasured these things in his heart.

But God for him was preeminent because it was his rightful place to be in God's company. And we grumble and complain sometimes about that reality as if it's unnatural or unfair.

[ 16 : 08 ] But he's our creator. He's our sustainer. He is in life before us, he is always there. When we die, he will still be there.

He's a life giver, redeemer and judge. And it's a great realignment for us to give him his rightful place where we enjoy being in his company, where we want to be around the Father's house and where we take that responsibility seriously.

You know, if you are diagnosed with a serious heart condition, then it focuses our mind, doesn't it, on what's important and what we will spend time on and what we will do and who we will spend time with.

And then if we're healed from that condition, it will probably again re-align our hearts and our thinking and our appreciations.

Place changes everything and it changes what we think of God and the time we spend with God and our understanding of what responsibilities are.

[ 17 : 13 ] So he was someone who took the responsibility to be in the Father's presence, who's home.

We need to do that also. And then very briefly, a couple of things, we know also from this passage that Jesus was learning. He was perfect, Son of God, there's a bit of mystery in that, I guess.

But as he deempted himself, he had become dependent on God and dependent on the Spirit. He was learning afresh as he was born and as he grew up and as he came to this age and we're told that he went into the temple and he was sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

And everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. Now I know that we can't compare in our own lives with Jesus at that level because of his perfection and because the uniqueness of his character.

But as children of God, we are people who are to be disciples with a responsibility and a recognition of learning and growing and submitting and obeying and serving and following Jesus Christ and learning about him are a great responsibility for each of us young people or not so young that we keep learning about Jesus.

[ 18 : 35 ] That you come under the word, that you make church important because you're learning about God through the preaching and teaching and reading of God's word. That you come to identity and you're asking your questions.

It's not good enough really just in our lives just to sit passively and receive because we know that we learn more when we ask questions. And we know there needs to be that opportunity in young people's lives particularly to ask their questions and to not feel that they're either stupid or crazy questions to ask.

People ask and learn and learn more and more about Jesus Christ. Now any of us if we've got a passion in our lives we want to learn more about it whether it's photography or dance or sport or art.

If we've got these gifts and interests we want to learn and we want to learn from others who can teach us and become to a degree more expert at what we have a passion for and that should be true of our faith that we have a passion for Jesus Christ and like Jesus here who was learning about the Father and His perfection was able to take in so much and was able to understand and assimilate more than we ever would be because of the barrier of the sinful nature then.

But we also are to be learning in our lives and in our experiences and what is God saying through the circumstance and the suffering and this difficulty where He's teaching in these what is happening in my life and what is He saying through His word.

[ 20 : 21 ] We never stop. If we stop as older people we stop learning then our love will go cold because we are always learning at the feet of the Master.

The last thing very briefly is that He was also growing. He was growing in verse 52. He went down to Nazareth with them as He would be doing to them but His mother treasured all these things and Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and men.

So He was He recognised His responsibility to be in the Father's company. He loved that and where He was there He was learning and that was His response and also He was growing and it kind of flicks back to Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 4.

It says, Let love and faithfulness never leave you, bind them around your neck, write them in the tablet of your heart, then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man. It's the same kind of phrase that's used there.

Love and faithfulness, then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and men. He was growing wisdom and stature in favour with God and men and His perfection is God.

[ 21 : 35 ] It's hard to understand but yet as a man He was growing both physically and spiritually and that's our responsibility too as young Christians and as Christians generally.

So physically we can't make our bodies grow, there's nothing you can do to actually make your body grow.

You can't make you taller, you can't make yourself taller or wider yourself. It's not something that we can do but we can feed ourselves with the right food to make us grow.

We can exercise in the right way to make us stronger, we can sleep with a good sleep pattern so we are healthy and provide the conditions for growth to happen.

And that's what we're asked to do in discipleship. We don't make ourselves grow spiritually but we live in such a way that provides the conditions for growth to happen.

[ 22 : 52 ] So we feed on God's word and we feed on God's company and we learn from Him and we seek by grace His wisdom and His faith that He gives and in so doing we will bear fruit and grow in His company.

So when we do so and it's a battle isn't it, I'm not suggesting that it's easy for us young or old but when we do so He promises us blessing, growing in stature and in favour with God and men.

God's blessing is with us. When we say, there's a great part, I can't remember in what context I was reading it this week but in Mark chapter 10 and with this I nearly finished.

Mark chapter 10, I hope of, yeah. The cost of following Jesus, we speak a lot about the cost, the pain, the price of following Jesus, we know grace is free and salvation is free but there's a cost isn't there?

And we talk about the cost and Jesus speaking to the disciples about the cost you know because the rich young man had just been in Jesus company and Jesus said give up all you have and sell it and come and follow me and the man went away sad because he had great wealth and Jesus talks about what is impossible with men is not impossible with God.

[ 24 : 22 ] Peter says we've left everything to follow you, the cost. Jesus says no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel, the cost, will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age, not in heaven, homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields and with them, interesting what does he say there, and with them persecutions and in the age to come eternal life but many are first will be last and last.

That's a great emphasis that we get from Jesus here. Yes there's persecutions, yes we are giving up but we receive a hundred times more in this life and then in life to come eternal life.

So he's reminding us that there is great blessing in this life when we grow in grace and follow him and cultivate that relationship with him.

It's a peace that passes understanding, blessing of God. Unless we forget Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God, well we can appreciate and understand that, that's no problem for us and men and people.

Think something, we easily forget that. Somehow we feel that the holier we become the less we will be liked, the less favour we will find with men and women, that somehow holiness sets you apart from other people and makes you less likely to be in their company.

[ 26 : 02 ] Jesus the holiest man who ever lived is he grew in wisdom and stature, he grew in favour with God and with men and we know that in his ministry he was popular, people flocked to Jesus, the children came to Jesus, he was liked.

Now I know there came a stage when his teachings got hard and people drifted because he exposed the light of his grace exposed the darkness of their hearts and that's the same today.

But please don't use the excuse of being a Christian as an excuse for being ugly or unpopular and blame it on God.

Oh, it's because I'm a Christian. Maybe it's just because we're being ugly and unpopular and have nothing to do with the grace or the gospel. But remember if we are being honest and if we are being faithful to God there will be a time when people will walk away and say these are hard sayings or they'll not follow because they were not willing to give their hearts to the living God.

But as we grow in grace and the closer we are to Jesus Christ we will find favour with God and with men.

[ 27 : 18 ] And that's an interesting balance and we need God's grace to understand it and we need God's closeness and we need to be in our Father's house all the time in this company learning from him because none of us are wise enough on our own.

So, you know, the message is really to recognise our responsibility this evening as Christians to be recognised our privileges but also recognise our responsibilities to be in the Father's company and to make time to do that.

And when we do that we will be learning and growing in our knowledge of him. It's a relationship and he's given us all the resources to do that. It's not in our own strength.

Take stock of our lives and maybe take stock of your life and think of where you were six months from here, six months back from here. Have you grown in your Christian life in these last six months?

Could you say you have learned and that your desire is to be more in the company of the Lord than less? I think these are good questions to ask ourselves and not just to despair if the answer is negative but to repent and turn back and to come into his company because he's that Father with the open arms wanting to forgive and renew and refresh and revive.

[ 28 : 46 ] He wants us and we want to be like Jesus and be in the Father's company. Amen.