

Our Father's Business

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to Luke chapter 2 and verses 41 through 52, the account of the boy Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem.

I must be about my father's business. I must be in my father's house. I'm not sure what I make of New Year resolutions.

On the one hand, the majority of resolutions we make on January the 1st are broken by January the 2nd. On the other hand, it's always good to want to make positive changes to our lives when we can.

On reflection, I reckon making resolutions is a good idea, but making them at New Year, perhaps, is not a good idea. Why not make resolutions every day to change things for the positive in our lives? Why not make daily resolutions? This is especially appropriate for us as Christians where we're often reminded to dedicate our days to God.

[1 : 19] For example, Psalm 118, verse 20, Psalm 118. This is the day the Lord has made. What's your resolution? I'm going to rejoice and be glad in it.

Or Joshua chapter 24. Choose this day who you will serve. Or Matthew chapter 6. Don't be anxious about tomorrow.

For tomorrow will have enough anxieties for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. There's the resolution. I'm not going to be anxious.

Daily resolutions. Not just yearly resolutions are what we need as Christians. Daily, we're going to rejoice and be glad in the day God made for us.

Daily, we're going to resolve to serve Christ and no other. Daily, we're going to rely upon the grace of Christ to cope with present troubles.

[2 : 24] As this morning we bring these verses in Luke 2 into focus, daily, we shall resolve, like Jesus, to be about our Father's business, in our Father's house, doing our Father's things.

And daily, we shall, as Christians, resolve to worship the risen and exalted Jesus that for us and for our salvation, he faithfully discharged his Father's business of salvation.

Resolutions really aren't the stuff of the 1st of January. They're the stuff of the Christian. Who, because Jesus strongly resolved to do his Father's business of salvation, is daily resolving to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

And be about her Father's things also. Well, now we're like three weeks after New Year. I can now encourage us, I'm sure, to try and make two resolutions for every single day of this year.

First, we're going to commit our lives to the Jesus whose life mission was this, to be about his Father's business. Second, we're going to follow in his footsteps and also do our Father's business.

[3 : 57] Well, there's two aspects of this passage that I want to explore with you today. First, Jesus and his Father's business. And second, we and our Father's business.

Again, can I encourage you to make these two resolutions, not just on the 1st of January, but every day, and like an offering, present them to God.

I'm going to commit my life to the Jesus whose life mission was to do his Father's business, and I'm going to follow in his footsteps and commit myself and my life to doing God's business.

First of all then, Jesus and his Father's business. You know, the childhoods of Jesus and John the Baptist are described in very similar ways.

So in Luke chapter 1, verse 80, we looked at this a couple of months ago, we read of John the Baptist, the childhood grew and became strong in spirit. Luke chapter 2, verse 40, we read of Jesus, the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom.

[5 : 11] We don't read much more about John the Baptist's childhood, but of Jesus' childhood, we have this very curious episode in Luke 2, verses 41 through 52.

Mythical writings, purporting to be scriptural, give several accounts of miracles Jesus performed as a boy, including one of giving birth, giving life back to a dead canary.

But these are all myths. These are make-believe fictions. What we read here in Luke 2, verses 41 through 52, is the only verified account of Jesus' adolescence.

Think this. This is the only recorded incident of Jesus from birth to the age of 30 years old.

The only one. And Luke has written it down for a reason. He wants us to know that Jesus was always dedicated to God. Not just during his public ministry from the age of 30 to 33, but during all those years of private preparation, for all those secret years of boyhood, he was about his father's business.

[6 : 32] We don't need mythical fictions about dead birds. They don't do us any good. What we need to know is that Jesus was always about his father's business. We need the assurance that Jesus was always obedient to his father, that Jesus was always sinlessly perfect, that the Jesus who offered himself up for our sins on the cross didn't have any skeletons in his cupboard, which would have rendered his sacrifice for us ineffective.

There's a couple of things I want us to notice under this heading of Jesus and his father's business. The first is this. From this passage, we see Jesus had a very special relationship with God.

He had a very special relationship with God. John the Baptist, the last and the greatest of all the prophets, didn't have this kind of relationship with God, but Jesus did.

As far as I know, the 12-year-old Jesus was the first ever human being to use the words my father with reference to God.

Adam didn't. Abraham didn't. Moses didn't. David didn't.

[7 : 58] John the Baptist didn't. But a 12-year-old boy called Jesus, not even old enough to be held accountable for his own actions under Jewish law, he was the first to call God my father, my father.

sure you can see how special a relationship Jesus had with God. In fact, even by this stage in his life, Jesus was so aware of the intimacy he enjoyed with God that he had chosen to stay behind in Jerusalem to learn more about God than to return to Nazareth to be with his chosen family.

even as a 12-year-old boy he had chosen God over family. God before Mary and Joseph.

He had his priorities straight. Later on, he would challenge his disciples and say to them, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

And back here in Luke 2, Jesus walks the talk. But the point remains, does it not, the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship with his father. It is of a higher order than any other relationship in his life.

[9 : 17] It's of a higher order than any other faithful servant of God before him. We'll expand on this in our second point. But one of, if not the most, amazing aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that through faith in him, we get to call God my father also.

We get to have the kind of relationship with God generations before Jesus could not even have dreamed about. We get to be his children and call him my father.

This is absolutely marvelous. We get to call the maker of the heavens and earth my father. Father.

The second thing I want us to see concerning Jesus and his father's business is what he was doing in the temple for those missing three days.

What was he doing? He was, according to verse 46, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

It's the standard Jewish method of teaching and learning, dialogue based upon questions and answers, what we would call today catechesis or catechism, listening, asking.

[10 : 40] Clearly from the reaction of the teachers in verse 47, they were amazed at Jesus' understanding. Now, I don't think I'm over-speculating. Well, I hope I'm not. When I suggest that Jesus and these teachers were talking about what the Old Testament had to say about the mission of the Messiah.

That's what they were talking about, the Messiah. Perhaps Jesus and the teachers, they discussed together Isaiah 53 and its portrayal of the Messiah as the suffering servant in whose death we have life and by whose wounds we are healed.

Perhaps they discussed together the book of Jonah and how those three days that Jonah spent in the belly of that great fish represented the three days the Messiah would be in the tomb but then rise again.

Yeah, we're speculating but it seems to me that the 12-year-old Jesus was learning in more depth what his mission as the Messiah was to be.

The righteousness demanded. The suffering involved. The path to victorious resurrection through sacrificial death. He's learning that he, the beloved son of my father, was to be sacrificed like Isaac. [12:10] Not in some zero-sum game but as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He's learning what it means to be the redeemer of his people.

What he has resolved to achieve and be for his people. He's counting the cost. This 12-year-old boy is willing and resolving to suffer and die for us.

You see, the obedience of Christ was not a one-off event. It was the settled course of a lifetime. It was not a one-off event. It was the settled course of a lifetime. Way before he made his way to Golgotha's Hill on the cross.

Way before he entered into his public ministry. way before he even became an adult. Jesus had resolved to obey God even to the point of his death on the cross.

[13:20] Now this is very important for us. For the believing Christian whose faith rests upon the finished work of Christ on the cross, to know that the Jesus who died for us there was perfectly obedient, yes even before the age of his majority is of unspeakable comfort.

The righteous gave himself for the unrighteous. The innocent gave himself for the guilty. If there had been even one small sin in Jesus past, in his childhood, his sacrifice on the cross for us would have been ineffectual and useless to save anyone but himself.

But this passage in Luke teaches us that from a child, Jesus' righteousness was perfect, spotless, and pure, which means he was a spotless lamb sacrificed for us.

And then the third thing, briefly, I want us to see concerning Jesus and his father's business, is that although without doubt the big issue of messiahship in his mind concerned suffering and resurrection, of no less importance to Jesus as a 12-year-old boy, was that in his day-to-day, moment-to-moment life, he was faithful to his father's calling to be holy, righteous, and loving in all he thought, in all he said, and in all he did.

We tend to think, don't we, that Christ's loving righteousness is best seen in his miracles. healing the leper, giving the blind their sight, raising their dead, but that's not true.

[15:21] Christ's supreme righteousness, which he presented to the father on the cross and his hours by faith in him, are not his big miracles.

They are the continuous things of his day-to-day life, the daily perfections of our righteous life, his daily love for God and for others, his daily discipline of word, thought, and deed, his daily devotion to his father and the needy.

He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth. Never once, even as a child, did he spin the truth, or was he ever unkind? Never once did he leave a good thing undone.

So his father's business, even as a 12-year-old boy, meant the million daily acts of devotion, righteousness, and love. His father's business was his daily lifestyle.

That's the point. His father's business was his daily lifestyle. It's all those 33 years made up of 365 days, each made up of 24 hours, each made up of 60 minutes, each made up of 60 seconds, and every second, a righteous and loving moment of devotion to God and to others.

[16:46] This is the father's business he's learning about at the feet of those teachers, and his understanding was profound and amazed him. You can almost imagine this 12-year-old boy Jesus, whose voice perhaps had not quite broken, speaking to these old bearded men in the temple and saying to them, what do you think the psalmist meant in Psalm 119 verse 33 when he said, teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, then I will keep them to the end.

The resolution of Jesus to love and be devoted to his father and to us was not made in a moment of madness. It was a continual, daily, hour-by-hour resolving.

It's his lifestyle. The medieval church, scholastics, enjoyed speculating on the minute things of the faith to which there are no real answers.

We used to do this as kids once upon a time back in the free church. For example, how many angels can dance on top of a pinhead?

Did Adam have a belly button? One of the questions that the medieval scholastics used to love speculating about was how long Adam and Eve remained in their state of innocence before they reached forth and ate of the forbidden fruit.

[18:17] Did they live in perfect innocence in Eden for many years and decades before they fell into sin or was it a matter of seconds? The medieval scholastics, after all their discussions, concluded it took Adam and Eve 30 minutes in the garden of Eden before they reached forth and ate from the forbidden tree.

30 minutes of innocence. Madness. Now, of course, medieval scholastics, I'm sure they were probably wrong.

And in fact, most of us probably don't care enough to know whether they were right or wrong. What is true is that for 33 years, the lifestyle of Jesus was one of constant and consistent faithfulness, innocence and righteousness, love, joy and kindness, peace, hope and compassion.

Try even for 10 seconds to rid yourself of every grumbling attitude, every complaining thought, every grain of disbelief.

Try even for 10 seconds to fill yourself with compassion for the criminal, the outcast, the maniac. Try even for a second, you will fail.

[19:50] why do I say this if not to evoke within us all the spirit of worship and praise for the Jesus who lovingly obeyed in the big things of dying for us on the cross and in the small things of a million daily acts of devotion.

He did what I could not do and you could not do. He surely is the blameless lamb of God and for that we worship at his feet and bow before him the lamb without spot and without blemish.

If you shall daily resolve to follow in the footsteps of Christ then what perfect and loving footsteps indeed they are. But don't just resolve to do this on the 1st of January.

Do it in the 2nd, the 3rd, the 4th, the 5th, the 6th and all those days and hours and minutes which make up our year. very briefly and as we close our second point today is we and our father's business.

Christ and our father's business, we and our father's business. We began our study today by thinking of the importance of making resolutions. If you think this is somehow frivolous and unimportant when you get home today go check up on your computer the 70 resolutions made by the greatest American mind of history, Jonathan Edwards, great pastor and theologian.

[21:20] They are priceless all 70, every single one of them. In this second point, having considered what Jesus, what's meant by Jesus being about his father's business, I briefly want to talk about how we can follow in Jesus' footsteps.

As a child I would do this on a very snowy day in the north. Snow was so thick it was hard for me as a wee boy to walk through it. so I'd plant my feet where my father had walked through the snow before me.

What does it mean to plant your feet where Jesus has walked? In the first instance, as you saw earlier, we shall enjoy our new relationship with God as Christians.

We shall enjoy it. By faith in Jesus Christ, he is my father. Now remember who God is. The God who by faith in Christ Jesus, you may call my father, the creator of the heavens and the earth, the infinitely powerful and eternally righteous God, the all consuming fire, the God who can destroy his enemies with the word of his power, but by faith in Jesus Christ, he's my father.

And we have all the privileges of the divine sonship, all of them. So to walk in the footsteps of Christ is first of all to enjoy our new relationship with God.

[22:55] Experience it, explore it, and enjoy it daily. I shall resolve to live as a son or daughter of God.

God. In the second instance, again, as we saw earlier, to walk in Christ's footsteps in this passage means that we shall have confidence in the sacrifice Jesus offered for us on the cross.

We shall have confidence in the sacrifice Jesus offered for us on the cross. For if Jesus at any point in his life had sinned against God or failed to fulfill the whole law in thought, word, and deed, then his sacrifice on the cross would have been ineffective because he would only have been dying to take his own sins away.

He would not be the righteous dying for the unrighteous. But this passage in Luke 2, Luke 2, 41 through 52, assures us that as the apostles will later say of him, he was a lamb without spot or blemish.

Listen, because Jesus was always about his father's business, our sins have been taken away and we have eternal life in the beloved. So again, daily resolve to live in the full assurance of the effect of the cross.

[24 : 26] And then lastly, as we saw earlier on, as God's adopted children, those justified by the sacrifice of the spotless lamb of God, to follow in our father's footsteps, follow in Christ's footsteps, in doing our father's business, means that we shall be careful to bring every area of our lives into conformity with the will of God.

We will be careful to bring every area of our lives into conformity with the will of God. It means not just to be faithful in the big things, but in the small things.

You know, we mix up categories. We value the gifts of men in place of their godliness. righteousness. We forget that Jesus' righteousness was made up of a million acts of faithfulness and not just a few great sermons he preached or a few great miracles he performed.

How we turn that on our heads in the evangelical world today. To Jesus, faithfulness to God was a lifestyle with every thought, every word, every deed being held captive to the obedience of God's word.

So here's a question, especially for the younger folk among us. Sometimes I think we have thrown the baby out with the bath water when it comes to these things. How consistent is your faithfulness to God?

[26 : 01] How fastidious are you about loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself? Are you one person at work and another person at home?

do you put on the nice face when you come to church but at home you're a horror? Or is yours the piety of Psalm 119 and that of Jesus where everything is brought into conformity with God's will for us in Christ?

This is what it means for us to follow in Christ's footsteps. And so we must resolve surely, daily, surely, independence upon God's Holy Spirit and God's promised grace, surely, to be faithful in all our thoughts, all our words, all our deeds, not just in the external actions but in the affections, the priorities and the choices of our hearts.

Daily resolutions, daily we're going to resolve to enjoy our new relationship with God as my father. Daily we're going to have confidence in the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross.

Daily we're going to resolve to bring every area of our lives into conformity with the word and will of God. According to a psychologist I consulted online, it takes an average of 66 days, 66 days for a new behavior to become automatic.

[27 : 38] In other words, for something we do to become a habit. Two months of doing something every day will make it a habit. If we want to enjoy our sonship, to grow in the assurance of faith and to press on toward godliness, it will take roughly two months of making daily resolutions to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and to be about our father's business.

Two months of daily resolutions, that's not long for the benefits the gospel offers. Never mind, it's got to begin somewhere.

It's got to begin somewhere for all of us. It needs to begin further back in this passage with Mary and Joseph. You see, even though they're his parents, they haven't really got to grips with who he is and they don't yet believe in him.

That's what must first change. Faith in Christ must come first. That's where you must begin today if you have not already begun there.

I shall resolve from this day forth to believe in Jesus Christ and entrust my life to him.

[29 : 03] Let us pray. we thank you for your word. We thank you that even the 12-year-old child Jesus had such an awareness of his responsibilities as Messiah that he daily resolved that he would walk in faithfulness to you.

And Lord, as we listen to Finn bubbling here, we're so thankful that in this church we have young people like Finn and Noah and all our children who perhaps will grow up to be far more faithful Christians than we've ever been.

And Lord, we pray for this that day by day they'll resolve to believe in no one else other than Jesus and to enjoy the experience of my father. all Lord, we're so grateful for your goodness to us.

Forgive us for our double-mindedness and help us to resolve to be yours and yours alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.