

Being about My Father's Business

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Preacher: Vijay Henderson

[0 : 00] Good morning again. I just wanted to start with a story and I wonder if you've heard of this person. His name is Robert Wood Johnson. Probably doesn't ring any bells to lots of people.

Robert Wood Johnson, he lived a long time ago and when he was about 16 he started working in the local chemist. He enjoyed that sort of work and as is the case back then, your job when you were 16 became your job for life and he got really into it and he started developing a range of bandages and surgical dressings for the chemist.

They sort of took off and when he was a bit older, along with Robert's brothers James and Edward, they created a more commercial line of bandages and dressings. Business was going really well and with the onset of the two world wars, obviously there was a huge demand for their product. Eventually, brothers Robert, James and Edward took their company public and they never looked back. They bought up pharmaceutical companies, laboratories, all the while selling their range of bandages and surgical dressings.

In 2019, it's still a family business. The company's global sales are around \$100 billion and they have 132,000 employees.

[1 : 14] This little family business is, of course, right, good, excellent. I didn't know how obvious it was but there you go, Johnson & Johnson. You see, when people say they're in a family business, you think about a farm or the local restaurant or perhaps even the mafia.

We don't expect a huge global brand whose products are in every home in the world. Our passage today is about family businesses. It's the curious story of Jesus being left in the temple when he was just a 12-year-old boy.

It's only recorded in Luke's gospel here, the passage which Mavis read. Nowhere else in the Bible do we know about it. One scholar, he said this, This is a lesson for small Christian children.

When Jesus was lost in Jerusalem, he didn't get into any mischief like many 12-year-olds do.

Instead, he spent his time with respected teachers in the temple. So I guess for kids out there listening, the lesson is if you're tempted to hang out at Westfield and be a nuisance, just call up Andrew Price and hang out with him instead.

That can't be the lesson, can it? It's a very curious passage but I think it's about family businesses. And the key is this play on words in verse 48 between Mary and Jesus.

[2 : 38] So Mary says, verse 48 to Jesus, halfway through, Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. Jesus says, Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my father's house?

Or as the footnote says, about my father's business. Your father has been looking for you. Why? I'm already with my father in his house. You see, this is a story about the tension between two fathers or two households, their businesses.

It's about loyalty and priority to earthly father Joseph or heavenly father God. And this is our first point. Look at verse 41.

Every year, Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. You see, that's what Joseph's household did. But one year, verse 42, When he was 12 years old, they went up to the festival according to the custom.

While his parents' house returned home, the boys stayed behind in Jerusalem. But they were unaware of it. It does seem strange, doesn't it, to travel a whole day without missing your child.

[3 : 53] It's not like you could miss them, obviously, it seems. But remember that all of Joseph's household were traveling together. Verse 44 mentions relatives and friends.

It was a huge family caravan going on a religious pilgrimage. It would be easy to miss little Jesus amongst the hustle and bustle of all the family. Verse 45.

When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. And after three days, they found him in the temple. Everyone in God's house was amazed at his understanding and his answers.

But his own household weren't so impressed. His mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.

And the translation of anxiously searching, I don't think it does his parents justice. You see, I was anxiously searching for my car keys. But Jesus was missing for three days.

[4 : 52] The correct translation of anxiously searching is actually a deep mental trauma. And I think that's how it describes what happens when you lose a child in public.

Have you ever lost a child in public? If you're not, have you ever been lost as a child in public? Deep mental trauma is the right, they're the right words, aren't they?

My wife, a few years ago, she was at Westfield. And our son, RJ, went missing at David Jones, the department store. After a while, the staff and the security were looking for him.

And of course, my wife was beside herself and tears and screaming. And it was quite a mess. It got to the point where they were trying to describe his clothes and look for him on the security camera. After about 20 minutes of this, RJ bobbed out and went, surprise! He'd hidden in the racks of clothing. His mother hugged him and smacked him.

[5 : 55] You know when mothers do that? Well, yeah, needless to say, Jesus is in big trouble too with his parents. Verse 48, Son, why have you treated us like this?

Your father and I, a family language, have been searching for you. Why are you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be about my father's business?

It's the tension of two households. See, there's the earthly day-to-day of Joseph's house. They lived in Nazareth. Carpentry was the family business.

Annual Passover pilgrimages was their custom. But there's also God's family business. And even at a young age, Jesus is already starting to take his place in God's business as well.

This is our second point. There's always a lot of conjecture about what God's business is. That is, what is God's work in the world? What is the mission of the church?

[6 : 58] What should it be? But if you look on the slide, please, guys. This is so far in Luke's gospel alone. There's a few more verses I didn't include.

My soul glorifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. That's Mary. A couple of times Zechariah. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us.

And then the last one, from the angel himself. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Christ. He is the Lord. It's pretty clear that God's business is salvation.

And actually in our passage, three times we're told it's the Passover festival. Verse 41, 42, 43. The Passover celebrated God's rescue of his people Israel.

God is in the business of salvation. Why are you still in the temple and not heading home with us? Well, it's Passover time. Where else do you expect me to be?

[8 : 04] God is in the business of salvation. But it's important to note this. The fact that the sun rises, that the earth continues in its seasons, that is also God's work.

A care for the poor and the widows. A regard for social justice and the planet. That too is God's work. But so far in Luke, there has only been a singular emphasis on salvation.

Always centered around this young boy, Jesus. When old man Simeon meets Jesus, he picks him up in his arms. He says, My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all the nations.

We should spare a thought for Mary. All the way through Luke's gospel, she marvels at what people say about her son. But today is a very blunt way for her to learn about her son and what his priorities in life are.

And priorities will be a key word as we move to apply this passage. Because as Christians, I guess we feel the tension of two households as well. While we've got our own earthly day-to-day business, we also have a concern for God's work too.

[9 : 19] And the challenge for all of us, me included, is how do our lives show a priority of one over the other? In other words, how does God's family business relate to my family busyness?

In this passage, it's not very tough to understand what it's saying, but it's very tough to apply. It sounds like we're saying it's an either or. Either you're serving God or you're serving yourself.

Either you're spending all your time and money on church or you're just being selfish and having a family holiday. And so I want to show you a really important nuance in the passage.

Verse 51. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. Even though Jesus prioritizes salvation business, he still went with his family to Nazareth.

We know that Jesus was thought of as a carpenter later in life because that was his father's business. And he was obedient to them. Clearly, it's necessary, isn't it?

[10:30] And godly to sort out earthly concerns. We have to go to work. We have to earn a living. We have to pay our bills so we're not a burden on other people and the church. That is right and godly.

We have to take care of our families. We have to look after our health. We have to rest and relax. We can't neglect any of these earthly concerns out of some sort of false martyrdom.

We'll end up burnt out and no use to God in the long run. A lady in our church, she emailed me this week to say that she can't join us for January, February because her mother has fallen ill.

She has to move in with her mum and look after her. And even though coming to church appears more spiritual than just caring for an elderly lady, she has done the right thing, the godly thing.

It's right to look after earthly concerns and, in fact, godly at times. Even Jesus, he was obedient to his own family and committed himself to family responsibilities as well.

[11:35] And obviously for us here in the room, we all fall short, don't we, of prioritizing God's business first. We don't need to bash ourselves up here this morning.

This passage, it says that Mary didn't understand what Jesus was on about. We all have blind spots when it comes to prioritizing salvation business.

Verse 51, it says, Mary treasured up all these things in her heart. And I think that is the good application for us to treasure up or ponder God's family business and how it relates to my family busyness.

Let me encourage you to spend some time pondering, treasuring up. I'm asking the spirit in prayer to guide your sense of priority.

You might need to bring others into that conversation. Your spouse, your pastors, a Bible study group, trusted Christian friends. You might have to have a conversation with them about how salvation concerns and earthly concerns relate to one another.

[12:46] For my family, we've got, obviously we've got young kids and we're pretty busy. My wife, it's her birthday today actually and she still had to get up at six, which is pretty, it's a pretty savage thing.

And we probably won't get the kids off to bed till about eight o'clock tonight. It'll be quite nonstop for her. God has a lot of Henderson busyness that he has to contend with.

My wife is very helpful when it comes to big decisions. I quite easily become inwardly focused and she always just says, hang on, how does this relate to gospel ministry?

How does this serve the gospel, what you're proposing? That is salvation business. Perhaps you're not able to prioritize other people's salvation due to certain conditions at the moment.

If that's the case, that's fine. Please prioritize your own salvation. You see, if you're not able to look after everyone else and set the world on fire Christianly, please nurture your own walk with Jesus.

[13:49] If you go to miss church or come off the roster or reduce your financial giving or stop your financial giving, that happens sometimes for seasons in life. That's fine. Please nurture your own salvation.

That way you're always about salvation business. You're demonstrating a priority for that in your life. Please read your Bible. Please pray. Please attend church this year.

The online services this past year, they've been pretty great, I think, in terms of being a band-aid for us. But please don't use them.

We're going to continue them for nine o'clock. Please don't use them because of a lack of priority for church attendance. Actually, online church is there for those with a high priority for meeting together so that if they're sick or they're away, they're showing how much they're desperate to still be a part of what we do in this room.

Here's a good resolution for the new year straight from Scripture for 2021. Prioritize our father's family business just like his son.

[14:59] You don't have to quit your daily routines and go to Bible college, although for some of you, that's exactly what you should do. You don't have to stand on a street corner and shout the

gospel at people, although for some of you, speaking more about Jesus is exactly what you should do.

Here at this church, I guess you could call it a temple, our temple business. We're so blessed in this church to have so many servants, people who keep giving, keep serving, keep working.

So many people here are dependable and loyal and hardworking. They're sacrificial with their retirement. It's fantastic. You need to know that the most mundane, earthly-looking jobs play a role in other people's salvation.

You need to know that your duties, however plain Jane they look, play a role in saved people remaining in the family.

We're so thankful to God for your service. But it's always right, isn't it, with a passage like this, to challenge ourselves, to challenge where God's family business and my or our family busyness meet.

[16:14] A regular, honest health check about priorities. I think that's the challenge of this passage today. There are many ways for you to play your role in salvation business here in Doncaster.

And of course, there's so much more to say on this. This would be such a great conversation to have a question time and just keep talking about our particular situations. But we need to finish. And so let me finish on a positive. I started talking about Johnson & Johnson. And it started out like a family business but ended up to be this huge global player.

And we all aren't lucky enough to be in a great family business that makes lots of money. But if we're Christians, then we're already employed by God in his company.

The Johnson & Johnson family business, a hundred and so many years old, worth billions, thousands of employees. Its products save people from cuts and abrasions.

[17:16] God's family business saves souls through Jesus. Salvation business, gospel ministry, it starts out small. Perhaps it's just you and a couple of brothers or sisters.

But God's business was from the beginning in its origins. Its future plans are eternal. Its reach is global. Its value is beyond price.

Its team, more numerous than the stars and the sand. Its offices in every city in the world. And if you're a Christian, then you're given a job for life.

There are so many ways to prioritize salvation business. At home, at church, at uni, amongst family and friends, in the community, with our time, our money, our efforts, our marriages.

So many places and ways and dimensions to prioritize the salvation of souls in Jesus. Verse 48.

[18:19] Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. Why are you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be about my father's business? Let's pray that we'd be like the sun and prioritize the business.

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you tell us the truth. And Father, please help us to prioritize salvation business.

Whether it's for other people, perhaps here at this church, or just our own personal walk with Jesus. Please, Father, would we prioritize your business over our busyness.

Help us to think through, help us to pray over how business and busyness relate. Please help us not to feel bashed up, but just to spend time thinking through this and working it out in our lives.

We pray, Father, we'd always be about your salvation. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.