

Losing God

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Date: 19 January 2025

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everybody. As you can see, I'm going to try and multitask.

! As you can see, we're in Luke chapter 2.

We're going to pick up at verse 39. But like I said, I need help, so I want to pray one more time.

Okay? Father, we look to you. And Lord, I do ask that you would just be honored and glorified, even as we've talked about, sang about.

Let me just acknowledge our need for you, that you would speak to us by your Spirit, through your Word, and communicate that which you would have for us today.

So we look to you now, in Jesus' name. Amen. So again, if you would turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 2 and verse 39, that's where we're going to begin.

[1 : 17] Fair warning, the Scripture text is not on the slides, so you want to turn in your Bible or grab one in front of you or open your phone. Anyway.

Generally speaking, I think those of us that are parents, grandparents, those kinds of things, we take interest in our kids as they grow up.

We have those milestones, those things we look forward to. How early did they crawl? Did they sit up? You might have a place in your house, a door frame, maybe a wall in a closet or behind the door where you mark off every year how tall they are.

We look at those kinds of things and take note of them. As our kids get older, we look at things like academic achievement, maybe athletic achievement, maybe artistic, music, art, those kinds of things.

We take note of achievements of our children, and I think appropriately so. The Lord's perspective is a little different than ours.

[2 : 38] Now, He gifts us and enables us, but He is most concerned about our, His children, spiritual growth.

So, that's, again, the accomplishments that we, that our kids may take or achieve in life or good in this life.

But in the end, that's not what matters. In the end, what matters is where they are in relationship with the Lord. So, again, the thing that's most important is eternity, not the temporalness of this life. In Matthew 16, Jesus says, What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?

Again, the most important thing is where we stand in our relationship with the Lord. John chapter, or 1 John chapter 5 verse 12 says, He who has the Son has life.

[3 : 59] He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. Jesus Himself said, He who is not with me is against me.

So, again, the Scripture is quite clear. That's, that's the definitive issue in our lives and the lives of our kids. And, again, why the Father is so concerned about the eternal, the spiritual aspect.

Right? Now, because we look at Luke's account of the gospel, his focus is on Jesus being the Son of God.

And he deals with the humanity of our Lord more than any of the other gospel writers do. Luke gives us the most information surrounding the Lord's birth.

He takes us with Mary and Joseph to Jesus' dedication and the prophecies that we looked at last week of Anna and Simeon.

[5 : 07] And following that dedication, Mary and Joseph stayed in Bethlehem for a period of time until the wise men come. And they were warned about Herod and his command to kill all of the male children two years old and under.

So, again, the majority of the issues surrounding Jesus' birth coming from Luke's account. The Lord speaks to Joseph in a dream and tells him to take his family to Egypt where they would remain until Herod's birth, fulfilling the prophecy in Hosea 11 that says, Out of Egypt I will call my son.

And then Matthew tells us in chapter 2 that when he, Joseph, heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside to the region of Galilee and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be, there we go, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene.

So, again, we see that God has his hand on all of this. You think of the threats, yet God knew beforehand what he was going to do.

[6 : 42] Speaking through these prophets centuries before, and then the fulfillment through the circumstances surrounding the Lord's birth in his early years.

And I think we can take confidence and comfort in that, that he knew full well what was coming and he moved the pieces on the chessboard, if you will, to care for and provide for his son.

And he does the same for you and I. He knows the things that are coming into our lives and he makes those arrangements and provides for us when we don't understand and can't necessarily even see what's coming.

So, again, apart from the Lord's birth, Luke's account of the gospel gives us the only information about Jesus as a child.

The only biblical information of about a 30-year span of time do we find in this, these last few verses in chapter 2 of Luke's account.

[8 : 01] Again, there's extra-biblical or apocryphal writings that talk of other things, but it's not in the Scripture. So, again, good for us just to stick to the Scripture.

So, all that to say, Luke chapter 2 and verse 39. It says, For when they had performed all the things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own city, Nazareth.

So, what was it that the law required? Again, what Pastor Rich taught on last week. That circumcision would be on the eighth day according to Leviticus 12.

That according to Exodus 13, it says, Consecrate to me all the firstborn, which opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast.

It is mine. So, we see that requirement of purchase, if you will. And then, thirdly, the offering of the purification rites for Mary that, again, were given in Leviticus 12.

[9 : 20] And it was a, verse 24 says that pair of dove or pigeons, which was the offering for the poor.

So, we have that background, that understanding of the financial position of Mary and Joseph. Now, verse 40, it says, And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

So, he grew. And to grow means to grow up, to enlarge, to increase.

Now, again, Luke pointing more so at the humanity of the Lord. We think of the incarnation and we think of the deity of Jesus, and that's all true, but we tend to not consider the reality of humanity.

Right? Here, here is a young child and he grew. He grew like you and I would grow. Right?

[10 : 36] He's a normal kid and he grew physically. And then I'm thinking, okay, he grew physically. Did he fall down and scrape his knees? I'm looking at these young guys and some of you older ones and I'm thinking, okay, how many of you had leg cramps in the middle of the night and you can't hardly move?

Right? But that's all part of growing. But we don't think about the fact that Jesus was a normal child and he grew up.

We don't tend to think of those things. I think, well, his dad's a carpenter. Did he help him in the shop? Did he smash his thumb with a hammer or a mallet?

Probably. The only difference is he didn't have a fit like I might have when I did that because he's God.

So some things were different, but again, he grew in the physical. Right? He also grew relationally. he had to learn to get around, get along with younger brothers and sisters, other kids in the neighborhood.

[11 : 57] Right? He was the perfect friend, but he had to deal with friends like me. Not so easy. But we don't stop to think about these things.

Right? He didn't do anything wrong, and I was thinking, when something got broke in the house because the boys were playing catch, Jesus didn't do it. Somebody forgot to feed the goats? It wasn't Jesus. He was one of the other ones. Right? But that's the family dynamic, and those are relational things.

Now, he was God, but he has to grow in dealing with these kinds of things. And thirdly, here, we see that he grows spiritually.

Now, it says, verse 40, that he grew in spirit, filled with wisdom, and in grace of God was upon him. [13:13] Wisdom being the application of knowledge. Now, it's not up here because I added it later, but Proverbs 9, 10 says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

So, as he grows in his relationship with the Lord, he learns how to apply the understanding of this relationship with his heavenly father.

He's learning how to apply these things to his life. Now, he would have attended synagogue on a weekly basis, but he also would get instruction in the scripture at home.

Deuteronomy 6, 4, and 5 says, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

And these words, which I command you today, shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

[14:40] And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets before your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts, of your house, and of your gates.

In other words, you and I as parents, grandparents, were to be diligent about teaching our children, our grandchildren, about the things of the Lord.

And how do we go about that? That's the question, right? Well, one of the ways is through our conversation, right?

how we converse with one another, how we communicate, the words we choose, the things we say, again, that speaks volumes, what we say.

Secondly, how we live our lives on a daily basis, right? do we live the things we're speaking and teaching our kids?

[15:54] A lot of times, how we live speaks more, communicates more than the words we use. So, not only in bringing our kids to church, but how we live our lives and how we speak.

And then we have how we treat other people, right? Part of living, but do we really care about and love people the way the Lord would have us?

and do our children or our grandchildren see those things? And then lastly, is our perspectives, right?

Our perspectives are how we view things. Do we see the world around us from a biblical perspective?

Does that influence how we live? or do we see it simply from the worldly perspective? And we kind of have the same outlook on things as everybody around us that don't know the Lord.

[17:23] So, again, the scripture says we should have these things and we should be reminding our children, our grandchildren, should be reminded about all of these things as they come and go from our presence, our home.

Is the way, again, the way we live at home, behind closed doors, is that reflective of the things we speak and how we live and how we treat people out in public?

public. So, again, important and as a reminder that Joshua would say, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Again, easy to say, but is that what is actually taking place inside our home? Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 4, and you fathers, and I personally, I think this is fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training, in the admonition of the Lord. God appoints men as the head of households, the priest of your family, and he calls us to be accountable for these things.

[19:05] Now, again, I think of myself when our kids were young, I didn't know the Lord.

All of that fell on Maggie, and thankfully, good church support, and those types of things. Now, when I come to know the Lord, that responsibility transferred to me.

So, again, depending on your situations, not always ideal, but the Lord still calls us as men, men sitting here in this room, men who may be watching or listening in the future, he calls us to be the head of our household, and to take the responsibility that he has placed on us, or given us. Okay? And we're to be teaching our kids, raising them up to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, we're going to see, again, how this all worked, I have no clue. But the appearance is Jesus grows in his understanding of who the heavenly father is and his relationship with them.

[20 : 41] And again, how that all works, I don't know. Verse 41, it says, and his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of Passover, and when he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.

Now, the law requires in Deuteronomy 16, three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in a place which he chooses at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks, and at the feast of tabernacles.

They shall not appear before the Lord empty handed. So, Passover was the opening day of, or the opening celebration of the seven-day feast of unleavened bread.

So, we see that Mary and Joseph and Jesus and probably any younger siblings you may have had at this time go to Jerusalem because that's where God chose for them to meet and to gather.

And they, so they're making this trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem. Now, travelers in that day, especially going to those festivals or those feasts, would travel in mass.

[22 : 02] Large family groups, those all that lived in the same village or the same town, they would all go together. They would travel that way primarily for safety and for fellowship.

Now, this was a distance. I looked it up. I'm trying to see in my notes. Yeah, there it is.

I looked it up on the internet where everything is true. Some things I think we can trust. But they said the distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem as the crow flies, which would be straight, was about 64 miles.

Now, they're walking. Whole town full of people. Now, I don't know if you're aware or not, that's what I do. I walk. I average at work about 12 miles a day.

Now, that's about probably six and a half hours. So, I'm thinking, okay, if they got 60, 70 miles to cover, they're probably doing 10 hours.

[23 : 16] I don't know. They're hoofing. Okay? They're walking. It's not a casual stroll. So, we're understanding what this was a task, to be obedient to what God has called them to.

It takes effort. same for you and I. To be obedient to the things the Lord calls us to, it takes some effort. And we're told that Jesus is 12 at this time.

Now, what's interesting is, in the Jewish culture, a young man is considered a man at age 13.

13. So, this is where Jesus is at. He's on this cusp of moving, if you will, growing, between a boy and a man.

Right? And as a man, guess what? He's going to be responsible for his own decisions. things. Now, go back to and think about this whole thing of teaching our children the things of the Lord.

[24 : 36] Now, the point in time will come, they're going to be responsible to make their own decisions. And guess what? The Lord will hold them accountable for the decisions that they make.

but we have to do our part. But they have to choose. So, it doesn't let our kids off the hook, so to speak.

When I have, say, a 20-year-old or a 30-year-old kid that's rebellious, guess what? They're responsible for that.

That's, I'm accountable for how well or how poor I did. But there's that point in time where our young people will be accountable before the Lord for their own decisions.

And again, that's where we're at in our text, is that point where Jesus is coming into that period in his life.

[25 : 52] Now, again, we find them going to this feast.

And then verse 43 says, and when they had finished the days, as they returned, the boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and his mother didn't know it.

So, again, the festivities all wrap up, the group from Nazareth gathers, they are heading back to the Galilee. Again, the women would be up front, the men behind to make sure none of the kids straggle behind, and we're told that Jesus stayed behind as everybody else leaves, and his parents aren't aware.

Verse 44, it says, but supposing him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey and sought him among their relatives and acquaintances.

So when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking him. And I think to myself, I can hear my wife, she would be freaking out.

[27 : 10] Right? Here is our preteen missing. Now, he's not wandered off in Walmart while we're there, or Meijer, right?

You gotta run around the store and try and find this kid. They have traveled a day, okay, a long day. It's not until they get ready to set up camp for the night that they got no idea Jesus isn't with them. And I think to myself, I can hear it. You lost God. I can't believe you lost God. I didn't lose him. You lost him.

He was supposed to be with you. No, he was with you. He's supposed to be a man now, so he should be with you guys. And I'm like, uh-uh. He's not 13. He should be with you. You can just hear this, right?

[28 : 09] what do you do when you lose God? Ever been there? Was there a time when the Lord feels far away or out of place?

Was there a time when you were closer to the Lord than you are today? Scripture tells us Jesus speaking says, nevertheless, I have this against you.

You have left your first love. Remember from where you've fallen, repent, and do the first works. It's interesting.

Maggie was reading in a devotional this morning and the Lord in his wonderfulness. The devotional was on losing God.

I think, oh, it's so amazing. But one of the points she shared with me was if we drop something and don't realize we dropped it and go away and then reach in our pocket and can't find it.

[29 : 43] It's like, where did that go? It didn't go anywhere. It's right where you dropped it. I moved. Right?

The Lord isn't lost. He's right where I left him. I moved. He didn't move.

Jesus was right where his parents left him. They moved away. He did not.

So, again, I think for us. So, so, so what do we do? Right? What do we do when we realize we've left the Lord? How do we get that back?

Right? We realize that, again, it's me who left. It's not him. I have to recognize that, realize that, admit that.

[30 : 45] It's me. It's not him. That's the first thing. And then, we have to remember what it was like.

Right? Can you remember when your relationship with the Lord was vibrant, lively, exciting, and it's not so much anymore?

We have to be reminded of that. Right? Do you remember setting the alarm early, to get up early, to be able to have the time alone in prayer, and in the scripture, where there's no distractions?

Do you remember when you used to just get away for a while, to talk to the Lord? Some of us, I would say, do you remember time with the Lord before cell phones?

Right? do we remember that, and what it was like? We need to repent.

[32 : 08] We need to change directions. We need to have a different mindset. Right? Do you, what, you know, what kinds of things were you doing before?

When the relationship with the Lord was good? What kinds of things were you doing? Or maybe, what were you not doing that you are today that we allow to interfere or get in the way with our relationship with the Lord?

we need to change those things. We need to put away the things that interfere. Right?

Or we need to come back, return, and do the first works. Go back to what you were doing.

Set your alarm earlier. Leave your phone in the house, I used to go out to the shed. Don't go someplace like the garage where you got work piled up because you're going to get distracted again.

[33 : 26] But we hear the comments, some of us, anyways, grew up with the understanding of a quote-unquote prayer closet, a place that is quiet and there's no distractions.

Go back there. Do those things. remember what it was like, remember what you were doing or not doing, and go back and pick that up.

Because again, the Lord hasn't moved. He hasn't gone anywhere. We need to go back to wherever, whatever, the kinds of things that were going on in our lives, and get back into those habits, those

practices, and reestablish that relationship with the Lord.

He's there. We need to realize, like Mary and Joseph did, we left them behind.

And the end of that verse, in verse 45, it says what? They returned to Jerusalem seeking him. Seeking him.

[34 : 36] And verse 46 says, now it was that after three days they found him in the temple.

And just what the prophet Jeremiah tells us, right? You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord.

And again, I'm thinking, this was not a casual, oh, we gotta go back. They were freaking out. It's a passionate seeking.

A heartfelt seeking. You know, I'm sitting there thinking, okay, when they realize he's missing, it's nighttime, they're setting up camp, and they're like, oh, I'm so tired, we've been walking all day. Did they just turn on their heels and head right back all night? Again, some of the things we don't get, but I wonder.

[35 : 45] They were passionately looking, seeking, and I think, okay, now I realize my relationship with the Lord's kind of stale.

How passionate am I about getting back to the way it was or it should be. So, they go back, and it says they search for him, again, with all their hearts, and they find him right where they left him, in the temple.

46 continues, he says, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers.

So, they find him sitting in the outer courts with the rabbis, the teachers of the law, the Bible scholars, the pastors, and he's asking them questions, and he's listening, he's trying to learn.

What are these knowledgeable people, what are their perspectives? How do they see the scripture? And you kind of wonder, what is the conversation?

[37 : 11] Now, we don't know, because the scripture doesn't tell us, but I kind of wonder, this is just me wondering, so, discard it if you want, that's fine, but I kind of wonder if they're not talking about the coming Messiah, because they're under Roman oppression, and we understand from the scripture that the religious leaders were looking for a deliverer from Roman oppression, they're under Roman oppression, the scripture talks about a deliverer, so I just wonder if that's not their combination, their conversation, but Jesus is sitting there in their midst, and he's listening, he's learning, right, he's growing, and again, how does this work?

God, who gave us the scriptures, Jesus, who is the living word, is learning and growing in his understanding by listening to teachers and questioning them, trying to understand, and they're obviously asking him questions, because they're probably looking at it, saying, this is a kid, where is he coming up with this stuff?

And they ask him questions, and he gives some incredible answers, because that's what it says, they're astonished at his understanding and the answers to the questions that he gives.

A 12-year-old who's been taught, not only in what we would call church, but synagogue, but at home, has a good grasp, right?

So we see this reflected. And Mary and Joseph find him in the midst of all of this, and verse 48 says, And when they saw him, they were amazed.

[39 : 17] And his mother said to him, Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I saw you anxiously. So again, I bet it was anxious. But you wonder if she's not responding in this way out of anxiety.

I imagine, yeah, she's pretty anxious, but they found him. But she says, what? What have you done? Why did you do this?

And I think, ah, sounds familiar. How many times have we, have I, asked the Lord, how did you let this happen?

Why would you do this? The reality is, what did Jesus do? He stayed seeking after the father?

They left. And I think to myself, okay, how many times is it because I took off without the Lord? I jet out ahead of him.

[40 : 26] I don't seek him. I don't wait. I just go about things my own self and then all of a sudden I'm like, oh, what are you doing, God?

and it's like, what did you do? You took off without me. So again, that's, that's Mary's response in this, right?

Jesus, you've, you've, you've made your father and I crazy. But the Lord wasn't in a hurry. Verse 49, he says, why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?

He's like, you should have known where I was. You knew right where to find me. Didn't you know I would be about my father's business?

[41 : 27] And it's like, ding, ding, my father, not Joseph, my father.

See, Mary refers to Joseph as his father. And again, I, I don't know, but I, I'm, I'm thinking to myself, is he just coming into that understanding more so on the human level because he's fully human? that Joseph's not his father. Again, he's heard all of the stuff growing up through the years. But is he coming to that understanding of the personal relationship with his heavenly father at this point? I don't know. But he's making a distinction between his heavenly father, and Joseph. And again, he says that I've come, you know, I must be about my father's business.

That's what he was born for, right? John 6:38, Jesus says, I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

[42 : 50] So he's growing in that understanding of what his heavenly father has for him. Again, you just wonder if the magnitude of what's to come is setting in for him.

But Mary and Joseph don't get it, right? Verse 50, he says, but they did not understand the statement which he spoke to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them.

But his mother kept all of these things in her heart. So they returned to Nazareth. And though Jesus seems to be understanding, grasping, growing in what this all means for him, he's still submitted to, obedient to his earthly parents.

Still living a fully human life, growing, studying, learning, maturing. All the while, Mary's keeping these things in her heart.

Knowing, because again, she and Joseph knew he was God's son. But what's that mean?

[44 : 23] They didn't know what that meant. They wouldn't fully know, Mary wouldn't fully know until she sees him on the cross.

But they're growing in this, all of them in that sense, right? But all the while he's growing and submitted to them and living in their home and being the perfect example for younger siblings, these things are running through her head.

And she watches them grow. And then verse 52, it says, and Jesus increases in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.

God will now. Again, the scripture doesn't give us anything more for the next 18 years when he would enter his public ministry at age 30.

Right? But he's growing. He's maturing. He's still living physically, developing, learning, growing in wisdom, growing in the grace and the knowledge of who his heavenly father is.

[46 : 02] And again, that's hard for me to get my mind around, but that's what it says. God's grace is on him. Think of that.

We think of God's grace on us, on me. But it says God's grace is on him in more and more abounding ways in his humanity.

It's different, but it's interesting to think about. And I think, okay, we look at how he is growing and maturing and developing in his relationship with the father.

I think if it's not, it should be our desire for our children, for our grandchildren. But it should also be in our lives.

because, again, we want our kids to be successful, but what's successful?

[47 : 25] Right? What good is it if one gains the whole world but forfeits his soul? We know eternity is beyond our comprehension, and the temporal world is a drop in the ocean.

We get all hung up on the drop in the ocean and not the eternal. But the father's focus and what we're seeing here is that, yes, growth and development and concern and issues surrounding the humanity, but he's emphasizing the relational spiritually.

So, again, what we should be focusing on. Right? If you're not there, but you used to be, figure it out.

go back. He hasn't gone anywhere. His promise is what? To never leave us or forsake us. He didn't leave. We do.

But encourage our kids, our grandkids to pursue the things of the Lord.

[49 : 01] They have to make that decision on their own, much as we might like make it for them. That don't work so well. But we have to do our part.

We need to live a life that is honoring and pleasing to the Lord so that they see that in every aspect of our life. As we go, as we go out and live life amongst the world, be it at work or whatever that looks like and behind closed doors.

They want to see the reality of what we're saying. So, let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word, for your love, your goodness love, towards us, that promise that you will never leave us or forsake us.

And Lord, I pray that as we tend to head off without you, that you would help us to remember, to realize what's going on, to remember what we had and is missing now, that we would simply acknowledge that before you and turn our hearts back and seek you passionately and rest in the promise that as we do, we will find you right where we left you.

And Lord, I pray for our young people that they too would have a passion for you. Again, that they would grasp the fact that they will stand before you on their own and give an account and that you would again, help them to recognize your love and that you simply tell any of us, regardless of age, that all we have to do is simply look to you, trust you to forgive us, to cleanse us, to make us new, and receive that gift that you offer, that we could be new, we can be changed, that we can walk in relationship with you, and then as we've seen today, to grow in that,

[51 : 53] Lord, and none of us have arrived, and you call us all to continually grow in the grace and the knowledge of who you are.

We thank you for your love, we thank you for the incredible sacrifice that you would make on our behalf, and that you would call us your sons and daughters.

In Jesus' name, Amen.