

Jan 7/24 – Leader’s Guide - Luke 2:41-52 “Foreshadowing the Risen Life”

This is the only story we have of Jesus from the 30-year gap between his birth and his baptism. Luke likely had a wealth of material to fill in this gap for us but he chooses only one story. Why this story over every other story? As we have already seen Luke weaves his gospel narrative by telling stories that are mirror images of one another that when compared reveal deep truths. As we begin we will read our text as well as the text that is its mirror image.

Read Luke 2:41-52 and Luke 24:1-10

1. What are the similarities between these two texts? What do you think Luke is trying to show us by telling these stories as mirror images of one another?

Both happen in Jerusalem

Both happen during Passover

In both Jesus is lost – dead – for three days and is found again alive

In both a pointed question is asked – Why are you seeking? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house – must be delivered over – must die – must rise again

In both the women treasure these words, remember them

What it appears that Luke is trying to tell us is that this story foreshadows Jesus’ completed work, foreshadows the risen life we are invited into.

The phrase – “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s House” – is a summary of what Jesus has come to do, foreshadowing the risen life he invites us into.

2. Jesus was the first person to ever refer to God as Father. As we go through Luke we will see that Jesus invites us into relationship with His Father as our Father. How does knowing God as Abba Father impact your life personally?

This is a personal reflection question but perhaps a few thoughts could help you navigate the conversation as a leader.

There may be some in your group for whom such language is difficult to use. Their relationship with their earthly father’s is difficult – perhaps their father is absent, distant, even abusive. In some Christian traditions out of care for those with such experiences the language of God as Father gets jettisoned. I believe when we do that, we lose more than we gain. If someone in your group struggles with the language of God as Father because of their relationship with their father, grieve

with them and for them and affirm that God is a Holy Father, a wholly other father, wholly different from any of our earthly fathers.

To have God as Abba Father is to know a God who loves us, cares for us, is with us in whatever we are going through, and will desire what is best for us. As you know this personally how does this impact your life? If you are ready with some examples, it will help others begin to reflect on it themselves.

3. If God is Father that means we have a new identity. In Jesus we are adopted as a "son of God", chosen, forgiven, delighted in, an heir to everything the Father has. How does this identity impact how you navigate your world?

Again this is a personal reflection question. Reflect on it yourself first as your personal reflection will help others to press into this question as well.

That I have kept the language of "son" may be difficult for some. In Jesus day only a son, the first-born son could inherit. If you were a firstborn son you were an heir to everything of the father – land, title, business, possessions... Women had no inheritance rights, none whatsoever – and so when the biblical writers spoke to Jesus follows, women and men and called them "sons of God", it was radically inclusive, radically egalitarian, and utterly transformative. What it communicated was that you regardless of your gender, you regardless of your birth order, you regardless of your past are a heir to everything the father has, an heir to an eternal and glorious future.

4. Very often our identity is built in the west on achievement, performance, accomplishment. What is the damage done to our hearts when we build identity in this way? How can our identity in Jesus bring healing to this?

Here is an unedited portion of the sermon that might help with this question:

We may build our identity in work - career – as a result we're incredibly driven – constantly overworking – sacrificing relationships along the way – despair setting in when work success or work itself eludes us.

Or we may root our identity in being good at a certain task, talent, skill – the praise of others confers to us our worth – crushed when we don't get it – jealous and petty when others get the praise we think is our due.

Or we may root our identity in our kids – impacting how we raise them - if we can't stand the thought of losing their approval we'll tend to permissively under discipline them – or if we see our kids as a reflection of ourselves there will be the tendency to over discipline them to control how others see us.

We may build our identity on our possessions – we must have the name brand clothing – the latest tech – miring ourselves in date as we chase the latest...

Or we may build our identity in relationships - the approval - acceptance of others - but are decimated by criticism - or trapped by a fear of losing the relationship we'll keep silent when we should confront damaging behavior.

But an identity in Jesus - as beloved son of the father can heal all of that - For with this identity - the lack of praise for our giftedness - lack of acceptance in that relationship - the sting of criticism will no longer deal a crushing blow - sure it'll still hurt - but it won't crush - for God's ultimate word over us in Jesus is - you are my beloved - I delight in you.

With this identity - we may find freedom from overwork - free our relationships from defining us - free our kids to be themselves - free our money to serve others.

5. Another way to translate this phrase - Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house - is - Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business. While not the best translation, it does capture part of the truth of this statement for to be in the father's house was to do the father's business. What is the Father's business we are invited into?

As we go through the gospel of Luke we will come to see more and more what the work of the Father is. It is nothing less than the renewal of all things. Jesus' loving Kingship being expressed over every aspect of life. Our world shot through with his love, justice, goodness and peace.

6. What is the first thing Jesus does after saying this to His Mom? What does this tell us about what it means to be about the "Father's business"?

He doesn't immediately go out to teach, heal, confront injustice. He goes back to Nazareth as a son. For the next eighteen years he lives a typical life.

I think this reveals to us that the Father's business is not an over and above work. It is lived out through our own work, in the relationships we are invited to foster, the communities we are already invested in. This will require prayerful dependence and intentionality, but it is lived out exactly where we find ourselves.