

Luke 2, it's an interesting story picking it up in verse 41. Life is really about perspective. Last night, my wife went to a concert in Dallas with some friends and family. I got home and my son was in bed and my daughter was sitting up next to me and we were just kind of chatting about her day. And she said, "Daddy, I wish we were rich." And I said, "Okay, we are. We are rich. What do you mean by rich?" And she says, "I wish we had a big bed. And I was like, "Baby, your mommy and I have a California king bed. I had to special order it. They don't get bigger than that." And she was like, "No no no, I want a bed that Mimi and Pappy, Nana and Papa and Sage and Kaitlyn and mommy and Reid and a bed we can all sleep in together." And so I was like, "Okay boo. Daddy can afford that, but that ain't happening. Now go to your bed." So in the end, it really is about perspective. My daughter thinks wealth is having a bed large enough for basically everyone she knows, her whole universe to sleep together. So it is really about perspective, and here's what I want to do as quickly as I can. I want to establish some perspective that I hope will help where you find your life playing out. So let's look at this. Verse 41, "Now [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.'" And Jesus plays the God card. None of us had this when we were twelve. We had to think of something else. He just goes, "Why were you looking for Me?" Now in my house, that would have got you punched in the eye. "Where were you?" "Why were you looking?" That would have gone horribly, horribly wrong for me. Maybe your parents didn't love you and didn't beat you. Let's go. "And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Or some of you might have version translate, "be about My Father's business?" (NKJV) This is correct. It's the same idea. In the 1st century, this "being about the house" and "being about the Father's business" are synonymous. And so, what I'm wanting to do in order to establish some perspective in our lives is I want to talk about what the Father's business is in Jesus. I want to talk about what He is accomplishing in Jesus.

So flip over to Colossians 1. In order to figure out the business of God in Jesus, what Jesus is up to in the temple and then really everything else He's going to do, we've got to figure out a little bit who Jesus is. By the way, this is a really strange story, not the Colossians one but the Luke one, in terms of the life of Jesus. It's the only picture we have of Him between infant and active ministry at age 30. And it's really kind of an unglamorous story. There's nothing really spectacular. If you go and read some other kind of ancient literature, they are all these really crazy stories about Jesus as a kid. There's one where He was playing in a puddle and made the puddle part and another kid came by and threw a branch in it. And then He was like, "What's that water to you," and then bam, He killed him. I don't think that happened. It's just one of those kind of supernatural stories that people want to attribute to the little child Jesus, the little teenager Jesus, which makes this one a little more believable in Luke because it's just kind of, "He went to the temple and started teaching. That's what you get at age 12." So let's look at Jesus. We'll pick it up in verse 15. "He is the image of the invisible God,..." Now I love that verse. I've loved that verse for a long, long time. Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth is the image of the invisible God. Which means all we would want to know about the character, temperament and personality

of God, we see in the man, Jesus. How does God handle sin? Look at Jesus. What's God's tone towards this group? Towards that group? Look at Jesus. I mean, this is a pretty profound verse. That should send you to the gospels to read. What's God like? This image of the invisible God is found in Jesus.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him." Now here's a little brain-teaser for you. The authority which his mom is using to rebuke Him was given to her by Him. Because the text just said that all rule, all authority, all positions of power were created by Christ for Christ. So the very authority a mother has over her children was given to that mother by her child. Anyway, let's keep going. "And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things..." Now I need to spend a second on this word "reconcile." Because in order for something to need to be reconciled, it has to be broken. He's saying here that Christ came and did His Father's business, and in doing His Father's business, He takes what's wrong and He makes it right. He reconciles it. He's reconciling unto Himself all things. How? "...whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." So whatever ails the universe was reconciled back to rhythm by the cross of Christ. That's what He's said so far.

Now, let's get into you and me, because that's Jesus. Now He's going to start talking about you and me. Verse 21, "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,..." That's a tough verse, and it's a tough verse because the majority of humanity is not going to own up to having a hostile mind towards God and being doers of evil deeds. What we want to do on a whole, specifically here, is find really evil deeds out there. I mean, we want to find a scale of 1 to 10, we want to find an 11. And we want to go, "See? Look at that. I'm not bad." And that's the game we play. We never use biblical standards. We just look at Omaha, Nebraska this week where a 19-year-old kid went through a mall shooting people and we watch that on CNN and we get the feeling that we're alright. I mean, we don't do anything like that. Or we look at atrocities and we want to lay ourselves against the atrocity and go, "I'm not hostile in mind towards God and I'm not wicked. I'm a good person. I even give to the little bell ringers at Wal-Mart. I've done that. I'm not wicked." Now, the problem with that is that the standard of holiness is not other people's wickedness. That's not how it works. And I know we've done this little exercise a billion times in my five years here. A litmus test of Morality 101 is the Ten Commandments. Are there any liars in here? Okay, that's one. And we could keep going down the list. Has anybody worshiped other gods rather than the real one? I know that's a big one. It's like, "No, I haven't." But yeah, we have. Our gods are just a little dumber than monkeys and cows. It's cars and houses and stuff like that, which is even dumber I think. At least a monkey and cow are living things. Has anybody ever coveted anything that someone else had? Have you ever thought they got it in an unfair way and you were worthy of it? Come on, you don't have to lie. Oh, you're liars. Never mind, we already established that. We could go on and on here, right? We fail, 10 out of 10. And everybody loves to hang their hat on the, "I haven't murdered nobody. Give me that one, Chandler." But I can't give you that one because Christ won't give it to you. He says, "Listen, it doesn't matter if you don't murder. If your heart's filled with rage, it's the same sin." Yeah, so you fail, 10 out of 10. You pulled a straight up zero. Do you know how difficult it is to bring your average up when you scored on the one big test a zero? I could tell you from personal experience, it's nearly impossible. And so we're starting out scoring the zero. So everybody in this room, I don't care if you were born in the church, I don't care if you were raised in it, I don't care if you've obeyed all its rules, you're just as guilty, just as broken. Everybody gets a zero on this one. All of us alienated, all of us hostile in mind, all of us doing wicked deeds, all of us. So now that I've got all of us chipper, let's keep going. "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [Jesus] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death." So the cross of Christ had reconciled, has made us right before God. And look how far the cross of Christ goes. "...he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him." The work of the cross means that you and I right now are holy and

blameless (without blame) and above reproach, which means no one can even bring an accusation against us. Is there anybody feeling that in here? Is there anybody walking here going, "Yeah. Oh, I'm blameless. Oh, I'm above reproach. You can call me holy, it doesn't make me uncomfortable." I mean, is anybody there? I hope not. Or maybe I hope so. I don't know what to do with this. But this is how God views you and me so far because of the cross. Who did this? Christ did this. Who's made us holy, blameless and above reproach? Christ has done this. Now this is a far cry from world religion. Religion's theme, it's bumper sticker is, "I obey, therefore I'm accepted." And you've seen none of that in this text. Christ reconciled it, Christ made it right, Christ fixed it, Christ makes you holy, Christ makes you blameless, Christ makes you above reproach. There's no mention of you at any level except that you're wicked.

But He's going to move on here and he is going to say we get this holy, blameless and above reproach deal if we continue on in doing something, but it's what that is that's so very surprising. Let's keep going. "...he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard..." I had a great e-mail about a month and a half ago that said, "Hey, I'm not trying to be offensive, but I really think you preach the same thing three out of four weeks a month." And I was so frustrated about this because I'm trying to preach the same thing four out of four. So I wrote back, "I need to apologize to you. I have failed you. I will get that fourth weekend." Now, what just happened in this text, it says that we get holy, blameless and above reproach standing with God not if we complete this task, that task, this task but rather if we hold steadfast in faith. In faith in what? In faith in the cross. Faith in Christ, hope in Jesus, that's where this happens. That's profound. Because everyone else would say, "Do this, do this, do this, do this, do this to get right standing." Biblical Christianity says, "Hope, faith and Christ, done. The altar's shut down. Christ paid the bill, absorbed the wrath of God towards sinners. Jesus." The reason why people really don't like for you to preach that a lot is because people will use that message of grace to just do whatever they want. And they'll say, "Oh, well there's grace and God forgives everything." Which is true, but the problem with that line of thinking is it reveals that you're not saved, unfortunately for you. Romans 6:1 says, "Shall we sin all the more so that grace may abound?" That's impossible. That mindset doesn't work in the heart of someone who's been conformed. Because although the gospel penetrating, the kingdom of God coming in Christ, the Father's business.

Although that's His primary role, Christ's coming also has a secondary role. And here's what I'd tell you. Throughout the pages of the Scripture, there are these men and women who tend to have one great virtue and then the rest of their lives are train wrecks. And then some of them, I don't even know what their redeeming quality is, I don't even know what their virtue is. I mean, e-mail me if you know of anything positive about Sampson. I can't think of anything. He broke every angle of his vow. Even that great child story that we teach all our kids about when he picks up the jawbone of a donkey and kills 20,000 people, he's breaking his vow. He's not supposed to touch anything dead and he picked that up. He's got major woman issues. I mean, that girl tried to kill him four times and then he waits two weeks and then he calls her back and is like, "Do you want to have something to eat?" He is the most codependent fool in the Scriptures. She tried to kill him four separate times. She's like, "The Philistines are upon you!" His hair is in a weave one time, he's bound by ropes another. I mean, this woman's trying to kill you, man. He's got a problem with this woman. He's got some lust issues. And even the pinnacle of this book is him, finally after breaking all his vows, the Philistines get him, gouge his eyes out and finally he finds himself at the pillar of a temple and he's like, "If you give me my strength back, I'll kill all these fools." And God's like, "Alright." And he kills everybody and himself. That's how the book ends. Esther had unbelievable courage. "If you go in there, you're probably going to die, but it may be for such a time as this that God has placed you where He's placed you." Job had an unbelievable amount of perseverance. Jeremiah's another cat with an amazing amount of courage. And I know he gets a bad rap because he complains about it the whole time, but it doesn't change the fact that every time he prophesies, somebody kicks the trash out of him and he keeps prophesying. David had an unbelievable amount of passion. So they all seem to have this one high virtue and the rest of their lives are kind of a train wreck. So in the person of Jesus, God puts all that is good, all that is right and all that should

be imitated. So then Jesus becomes not only the one bringing the kingdom of God, putting the kingdom of God at hand, dying as an expiation, propitiation, removal of our sin, but He also becomes the example by which we are to follow. And there's so many examples here. In healing the sick, He's teaching us benevolence. In rebuking hypocrisy, He's teaching us boldness. In enduring temptation, He's teaching us strength. In forgiving His enemies, He's teaching us grace and meekness.

And Jesus' life is not playing out in a vacuum; it's playing out in very similar ways to the way our lives play out. Like let me give you an example. Has anybody been to a wedding? We've got Jesus at a wedding, celebrating, serving. Have you been to a funeral? You've got Jesus at a funeral. In fact, one of my favorite parts about Jesus going to Lazarus' is that He weeps, mourns and wails. Because I don't know if you've ever been in that kind of canned Christian environment where someone has experienced loss and they feel it's their Christian duty to pretend they're alright, to pretend their heart's not failing, that they're not frustrated with God. And maybe by a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit, they really are that, but I've definitely been in the room where it's white-knuckled and six months later there's a collapse. No, Jesus goes, "Mourn. It's okay to mourn. It's alright to hurt, it's to be frustrated, it's alright to not understand. Mourn."

Has anyone in here ever been involved in conflict of any kind? Because it's almost like every seven verses Jesus is back in it. And with meekness and gentleness and always with truth, He engages the conflict. Has anybody ever had problems with their family? Like your mom thinks you're crazy, stuff like that? Well we watched Jesus do that, and we watch Him honor His mother at the same time fulfilling obedience. We could go on and on. If you've been in one place your whole life or you grew up in the ghetto, one of the things that happens is you get defined by who your dad was and you get defined by who your family was. And so, a lot of people tend to get crushed under the weight of that. So it becomes this self-fulfilling prophecy. Like when you're a kid, you're like, "I'm not going to be my old man. I'm not going to be my old man. I'm not going to be my mom." And then in the end, you become that. In the same way, Jesus goes back to Nazareth and starts working and preaching and teaching and what do they say? "Isn't that Joseph's boy? Aren't you a carpenter's son?" Christ refuses to be defined by that. In suffering, Jesus asks for prayer and leaned on God. In weariness, He sat down and rested. I love the fact that Jesus gets tired. We don't ever think of Him that way, but on more than one occasion Jesus got tired. In fact, one of my favorite stories is when He meets the woman at the well because He sits down, the disciples have been with Him the whole time and He's like, "I'm tired. Go into town and get Me something to eat." And so they head on into town. I always love it because He's feeding five thousand, commanding the winds and rain and yet He makes them go in to get Him a sandwich.

But watch Him with His friends. The Scriptures say He sticks closer than a brother. Watch Him within temptation. He uses the word of God and trusts that the word of God is good and right and active. In busyness, and I think a lot of us can relate, He always sought out solitude. In the busiest, craziest times, He would always find that time to leave and get alone with God. And I want to speak to something here because solitude and isolation are not the same thing. Most of us in busyness try to isolate ourselves. He doesn't isolate Himself; He seeks solitude and those two things are different. So Jesus is this consistent, constant example of life lived at the highest level, of life lived at the deepest level. I guess what I'm trying to ask is: What would Jesus do? I'm kind of angry and embarrassed that it came to that. I've been actively mocking that for years and here we go going, "No, we have a great high priest who has endured all that we have endured. So that on that moment when we're in it, He can say 'I know. I showed you a way out'"

Now, let me tell you some things I worry about. Here's the gospel: Christ coming and absorbing the wrath of God, being the One we are to model and pursue. I always had this romantic notion in my head of going some place where it was very difficult to do church. And what I mean by that is popular culture was not overtly conservative but more liberal, where there was a great deal of antagonism against the church, a place that would have very, very, very hard ground. That's where I always wanted to do this. And I'll tell you why. I think this is a romantic notion and I don't think it's true, but I'll

tell you why that was in my head. That way, you would know exactly what was in front of you each week. Whereas here in the metroplex, it's a really weird animal. I could be wrong here (I'm not but I could be) but it seems like for a majority of us, our relationship with Christ works very similar to our retirement program...like some kind of divine Roth IRA or some kind of cosmic 401k, where every month we want to put a little in in the hopes that when all is said and done we've saved up enough. And on a whole, it doesn't seem that there is a passionate pursuit of, longing for, submission to Christ as the covering over every area of our lives. But instead, He becomes our retirement program, something that's going to pay dividends when we get closer to death but not right now. Right now what I want to do is put in 3% or 5% a month because the church is going to match, and then my hope is that when my time comes and it's time to retire, it's time to die, what I'm hoping is that I've got enough that when I stand before God, I've put enough aside to get in. And there's a series of monumental problems with this. Number one: Christ doesn't use scales. Your church attendance and good behavior is not going to go over here and put on next to your bad and weighed out. That's not what's going to happen. Who makes you holy and blameless before God? Christ, the cross. Not monthly installments of church attendance. And so I'm perpetually worried about us. I mean, do you know how many horrifying texts there are in Scripture, ones that should make us lose a little sleep every now and then? Listen, I've been an ordained minister for nearly fifteen years and there are still nights I have to get up and get on my knees and worry and press into the Lord a little bit about that "Will there not be many who say to Me on that day 'Lord, Lord?' And I will say to them, 'Depart from Me ye cursed for I do not know You.'" I mean, that is a horrifying text of Scripture. Or how about, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Here's what I guess. There's this monumental weight to this thing that seems to escape most of us. There's this eternal, unbelievable weight that most of us seem to miss out on. And so what we end up doing is we do these little good church things and we put that aside and then we have the rest of our lives. Or we say, "Jesus, You can have Sunday, but I've got this. Or You get this and I get this..." And the first problem is that Christ doesn't work on a sliding scale. And then the second problem is you're robbing yourself of real, legitimate, beautiful life. And I think as consistently as I've said anything here, I've said that God is not after your begrudging submission. God's not glorified in your begrudging submission but in your joy in Him. If you're like me, when I would hear messages like this, I'd just be like, "What am I supposed to do?" And I think that's always the legit question. I don't just want to come and go, "Do better. Amen. You're dismissed." I don't want to do that because I don't think it's fair.

But it's also difficult for me because I don't know where you are, I don't know where your life is. I know there are some of you who are not believers, your friends brought you or you've just been coming here for whatever reason and you like it a little bit, you're more intrigued than anything. By the way, that's Christ just wooing you to salvation, but we'll talk about that after. In the end, I know there are some of you in here who don't believe. And then there are some who do believe but you've been losing faith, you've been losing hope, you've been losing those things that are so vital to continue in. So how about we just do this? How about we just take a step this week? How about we just take a step of faith, just take a step of obedience? Maybe that's checking out a home group. Maybe that's finally checking out recovery. Or how about we go, "You know what I'm going to do this week? I'm setting the alarm clock for fifteen minutes earlier and I'm going to get up and open up the book of John and I'm going to read a little bit and just pray." Let's just take one step, just one step of faith. Let's just take one this week. That's where you begin. I mean, nobody puts on the cape and becomes "Super Godly Guy" overnight. That's not true. There are those guys. Jesus told a parable about them. They shoot up real quick and then the sun comes out and they die. So we want good soil, deep roots. Take a step. I don't know what that step is for you. Take a step, just one. And then let's let the Lord work. Where do you need to imitate Him? Where is that area of your life where He's been pressing on you, leaning on you, wooing you, calling you? How about we're obedient to that if that's indeed God beckoning you to life, beckoning you to joy, beckoning you to hope? The crummiest part of teaching and preaching is all you can do is throw it out there and hope. So I'm full of hope.

Let's pray. "Jesus, I thank You for these men and women and I thank You for this morning. I pray that You would protect the word that went out, that You would let it find good soil. I continually pray that You would stir our affections up for You

and that we might be that group of people mentioned in Romans 8 who long and groan for You. Jesus, thank You for Your love, for Your grace, for Your mercy, for the hope that's found in You. I thank You that it's hope and faith You seek. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

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