

02/16/25 - Luke 2:21-52 - "Pebbles of Influence"

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to Luke 2, 21-52. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.

And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.

And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

And he came in the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

[1 : 09] For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed.

And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. And there was a prophetess, Anna, and the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher.

She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was 84. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.

And coming up at that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

[2 : 15] And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

And when he was 12 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 he said to them, Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my father's house? And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

[3 : 20] And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

And this is God's word. Thanks be to God. Praise the Lord for the reading and the proclamation of his word.

And we're continuing in our series in Luke and quite a lengthy passage. Yes. It was quite intensive this week putting these things together.

As we do, I'd like to think about summertime. We're done with winter, right? Forget this stuff. Let's go to summer. And I think about fun summer activities with our family.

My mind doesn't necessarily go to spending thousands of dollars at Disney World. Right? The place is expensive. They get you. But instead, you know, in a pastor's, you know, lifestyle, I look forward to much simpler things at times.

[4 : 34] And I think we all do at different seasons. This would include heading to just Mill Creek Park. Guess what? It's free. It's free. And when I think of summer activities, I think of just going down to Mill Creek Park with the family and skipping rocks with the kids across the river.

And it's on those calm days. Even the smallest pebble sends a ripple across the crystal clear waters.

And the impact expands far beyond where it lands, no matter the size of the pebble. Unless you're my second-born Levi.

He doesn't believe in using small pebbles. He's a work in progress. He likes the big ones. You see, influence works the same way.

Even when things seem insignificant, it's the insignificant things that have a unique way of shaping us and those around, similar to that of a pebble.

[5 : 56] And what we will see occur throughout this lengthy passage today is that faithful devotion shapes future faithfulness.

And today we have the honor of witnessing Jesus Christ as he grows. All the way through his preteen years.

Parents of teenagers are like, oh, I know those years. And in Luke 2, we see three different seasons of influence in his life.

First, we'll see the devotion of his parents, Mary and Joseph, in his early years. Then leading to the devotion of saints around his life, like Simeon and Anna.

And the devotion even of Jesus himself. Independent, yet still obedient to the Father. And whether you are a parent today, a mentor, or just simply part of God's family, you don't got a title.

[6 : 58] You don't got these kids. What are you talking about pebbles, right? You don't got any of that. We are all influencing somebody in our lives.

And the question is, what kind of influence are we having on other people's lives? What kind of devotion are we modeling for others in our lives? And to go to the illustration, what kind of ripples are we creating in the life of others?

Pebbles. And so the sermon title today is Pebbles of Influence. And I want to dive in and see how God uses faithful devotion to shape his people.

And let's pray as we get into this work. And plead for the Lord to reveal his word to us so that it impacts us greatly.

Let's pray. Father, we come to you asking you for help to understand your word, to put the message together within your word as we look upon these early days of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 09] And seeing him from a diaper all the way to preteen years is just absolutely breathtaking to even think about.

So help us to see the message in the passage today for us. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Are you all with me?

Amen? Amen. Less is here. That's all we need, right? Good to have less back. Not working. Amen. All right. So the first section, let's look at devotion through following God's ways. And we see that in verse 21 through 24. Devotion through following God's ways.

And the opening verses of this passage shows us something essential about Jesus' parents. What does it show?

[9 : 09] Their commitment to obedience. They were highly obedient. And in verse 21, we see they were obedient to God's law. Jesus is circumcised on the eighth day as the law prescribes in Genesis 17, verse 12.

Not only that, but they were obedient to the angel Gabriel's instruction to name this child Jesus. Right? In verse 22, there's a little marker of time.

And when the time came, so fast forward now, out of that infantile state. Now he's about a month and a half old.

And when the time came for purification, according to the law of Moses, they went up. And so they're obedient to this law of purification. This isn't necessarily the most flattering part of being a woman.

A woman who bore a son was ceremonial unclean for 40 days. And if you had a daughter, you'd be unclean, ceremonially speaking, for twice that amount of time.

[10:20] According to Leviticus 12, verse 2 through 5. She was obedient, though, through this purification. And so in this time, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him before the Lord.

He was the firstborn male. Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. So this child, according to the law, had to be consecrated.

And so they were obedient in verse 22 and 23 to consecrate their firstborn. Firstborn child of firstborn male of every mother is presented to the Lord.

And then redeemed through a substitute. This is in Exodus 13, verse 2. And not only that, look, in verse 24, they're obedient to give.

They gave, according to the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. And this makes us understand that they truly were impoverished.

[11:25] This is the offering for those who are struggling financially, but don't have a lamb. And if poor, she could offer two doves and two pigeons.

And this is according to a provision from God himself in Leviticus 12, verse 8. And so what you have here within these early verses of this passage is something significant.

You learn a lot about these parents. It is obedience compounded upon obedience, upon obedience, upon obedience. Not a deviation.

And how did Jesus grow? If we go back over to verse 52, chapter 2, verse 52 as it was read.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. How did Jesus grow in wisdom and stature? How was that made possible?

[12:30] Through obedient parents who submitted themselves and their entire lives, their entire livelihood to the Lord.

This is the context of Jesus' early years. From diapers to pre-teen tantrums.

Right? We quickly see something that we can't miss. Especially for parents. It's not the main point. This isn't a message about parenting.

Though I'm sure some churches would take it and there it would. It would be three points on how to be a good, faithful parent. But it is something to remark. That parental obedience is the context in which children learn to follow their heavenly Father.

And so it begs a question for parents today. Right out of the gate. What do your children, what do my children even, as two of them are sitting here in the sanctuary.

[13:35] What do my children learn about serving God as they're watching me? In my own life. What do your children learn about serving God as they watch you?

Now the most important thing parents can pass down isn't wealth. Right?

But it's worship. It's to pass down a model of worship. The greatest need for the next generation is not another Disney trip.

It's not. Or all these experiences. No, they need parents who model obedience in service to the Lord.

Teaching Scripture. Prioritizing the treasures of heaven before the treasures of this world. Mary and Joseph were poor.

[14:33] They gave a poor offering at this time. A couple of birds. They ain't got money for a lamb. So God made a provision for them in Leviticus 12.

Their sacrifice was small. But even the small pebble of their devotion created the foundation where Jesus grew in wisdom and favor with both God and man.

A pebble. The passage continues into verse 25 where we see devotion through recognizing God's work.

In verse 25 and 26 we meet Simeon. Righteous. He's devout. He's longing. He's with the nation Israel.

He's a picture, a depiction of the nation of Israel. And he's waiting for the consolation, this comfort of Israel. And filled with the Holy Spirit who revealed to him that he would not die before he sees the Messiah in his lifetime.

And it will pierce her heart so vividly in her life she will feel it deeply. And what she will be feeling is literally the exposing of the evilness of man's heart that does not know God.

Maybe today you're not in Christ and you never really thought about how wretched the hearts of men are. The heart of man is inherently totally depraved, void of life.

It was the heart of man that Simeon prophesied would oppose Jesus Christ and put him on the cross. And Jesus Christ was.

[23 : 05] If you fast forward in the gospel, we get the glimpse of this early year. But fast forward to what Simeon is saying here about this child being consecrated, set apart as holy.

What this would mean is that he would be crushed on our behalf. He would be set apart so that we would not have to be by our rebellion.

And he took the penalty that we deserve. This is the bad news and the good news of the gospel. The marvelous news. So if you're not in Christ today, you don't have to have your story end that way.

Because Jesus Christ was not just appointed for the fall of many in Israel, but for the rise as well. Jesus defeated the penalty of your sin and rose victoriously to prove it.

And what a message from Simeon. The gospel message. It's available to all Jew and Gentile. Chosen race and an outcast race.

[24 : 12] Forgiveness is available to you by your faith in Jesus Christ. And the invitation is to come. To come.

And as you come, let's follow Anna to the temple. Luke turns the camera to an elderly widowed prophetess named Anna. Now if you ever got a glimpse of devotion, here it is.

She came to the temple at the very hour. At this very hour, the moment that Jesus was consecrated, she came up right then and began to praise the Lord.

And she spread the news to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Now this isn't in a pastoral sense. Anna was not a pastor.

Anna was a devoted godly woman testifying, evangelizing of God's marvelous work in history unfolding.

[25 : 14] And if you believe in Jesus Christ, the invitation is available to you to rejoice with Anna. to sing, to go tell it on a mountain.

It doesn't have to be Christmas time to sing that song. Any song, for that matter, in my world. We praise along with Anna and you're welcomed into that by your faith in Jesus Christ.

And the promise then, that you will be forgiven for your sin. That the one who was consecrated consecrated on your behalf to die the death that you deserve.

And he substituted himself for you. What a marvelous reality, isn't that? Don't let that get old. This time period, thinking back to Curanus, like the time in the reign of Curanus back in early parts of chapter 2, this time period was merely a pebble.

It was so insignificant. Joseph and Mary were merely just pebbles, little figures in the entire narrative. And then we meet in another usual day for Simeon, another usual day for Anna, pebbles of a day, right?

[26 : 41] But soon, all of this would encompass the life of Jesus Christ and his future faithfulness of all these pebbles surrounding him, creating this impact.

Luke ends even with the summary statement of all that has begun to unravel. In verse 39, and when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee in their own town of Nazareth.

And a little repeated statement that's repeated at the end is in verse 40. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

Certainly was consecrated to the Lord. And as the passage continues, we reach Jesus' preteen years. Luke provides this sort of complimentary narrative.

narrative. And I think a lot of you, and myself included, I almost split the passage up and broke these up into two separate sermons until I realized what was connecting the two.

[27 : 51] Because I don't believe that these two passages need to be disconnected. I believe it's proper to unite the two. Because just as trials seem to test us in unique ways, it would appear that Mary and Joseph, devoted pebbles, would be tested in the most horrifying way.

They lost the Son of God. And so let's look at that. Let's look at this. In the last part of this passage today, we see devotion through persevering God's test.

And in another expression of their devotion to the Lord in verse 41, they attended the feast of the Passover. Their devotion, we can assume, from the moment in diapers to tantrums, we see that they were devoted to the Lord.

Right? They attended the feast of the Passover and took along their 12-year-old Messiah. Imagine 12-year-old Jesus. It's just a year older than my son.

My oldest son has turned 12 this year. And there's 12-year-old Jesus. Now, they took him along, but they failed to bring him back. In verse 43, when the feast had ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.

[29 : 19] 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. Now, imagine the moment of realization here.

I'm no star parent. I have lost Levi. We lost Levi for about 15 straight minutes and it felt like hours at a soccer field. Your mind goes to all sorts of things.

What if he ran in front of a car? He's a pancake. He's dead. My son, I'm never going to see my son again. That's it. And we've jumped to those conclusions, don't we? And so the worst case scenarios, you can imagine this in their minds.

In fact, even, I think Home Alone depicts it great with Mrs. McAllister when she forgets Kevin. She's on the plane and screams. Right? Could you imagine this?

[30 : 22] Joseph, we lost the Son of God. Right? I mean, we seem to always jump to judgments.

We read the disciples and we're just like, you know, those pesky disciples, why would they doubt? Why would they fall asleep? Jesus told them to stay awake. Is it that hard to stay awake? Right? And we judge the disciples.

We kind of read ourselves and say, I wouldn't have done that. Baloney. Y'all would have lost Jesus too. Right? We always jump to these conclusions on others while we fail to realize our own sin.

We got log issues, log in our eyes. And many may discredit their righteousness with this single instance, like, how could they be righteous? Oh, obedient Mary and Joseph.

Yeah. Apparently, they don't care much about the Son of God. Who feeds Him? Who's responsible to feed Him? Right? You jump to these conclusions. I love the rawness of this narrative and this time of testing for these two devoted parents, these two pebbles.

[31 : 31] Because, yeah, life happens, something terrible occurred, but responsible parenting is not always when things are panning out according to some plan that you have, some perfect plan.

Rather, responsible parenting will turn every stone over upon this earth until you find your kid. And certainly that was me and my wife on that soccer field.

We must never forget that our righteousness is also observed by how we respond to our failings. Right?

our righteousness is not always contingent upon our successes and having everything all together, but rather how we respond when we do fail brings about the expression of righteousness.

Mary and Joseph, they responded to this crisis with quite immediate action. They were distressed as this passage says. Now, I've known parents who believe that they're utter failures because their kids are grown up, married, don't believe in the Lord, aren't following the Lord.

[32 : 45] They blame themselves and they carry the weight of that. However, those kids need righteous parents pleading for their kids' salvation, for their heart to be humbled by the Lord, covering them constantly in prayer.

And just because your kids aren't following the Lord doesn't mean that you failed as a parent. parents, the Lord is the one who draws. And it's the Lord who we trust as he sees fit to draw.

Amen. At a moment when all hope seems lost, the location where they find him would have brought a tear to any parent's eye.

You ever have those moments where it's just like utter frustration meets utter adoration where you're just like where have you been?

And you're on the verge of crying but also on the verge of saying what are you thinking? Right?

Now after three days they found him in the temple sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions.

[34 : 03] And we got to ask where else would the child of devoted parents be?

At church. At church. All who heard heard him were amazed at his understanding, at his answers.

And his parents saw him and they were astonished. Now astonished would be an understatement. Because Jesus wasn't lost.

He was exactly where he was raised to be. Exactly where he was raised to be. 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. us. And here we receive the first recorded words of Jesus Christ.

[35 : 07] If you got a red text Bible, this is a red text. Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my father's house?

In other words, how, what do you have to say for yourself? I mean, I'd be delighted to know how they've managed to discipline the Son of God.

It would be a challenging time. But more importantly, and vital that we must see today, is this 12-year-old boy demonstrates a profound understanding of his identity and his purpose.

Greater than Mary and Joseph, can even comprehend in verse 50. All unfolding within the context of mere pebbles making an impact.

Verse 51, and he went down with them. People say that, oh, Jesus sinned, he ran away from home. That's not the case here. Jesus was sinless. The sinless sacrifice.

[36 : 18] You see that here. He was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her hearts. Frustration and adoration. And the last summary statement, in Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Many today read this passage and kind of just jump to this parenting guide. Ten steps to being a great parent. Coming to some church near you.

But this isn't just about parenting. Yeah, you get some parenting hints in it. You can't escape it, so you preach it. But even greater than that is if you stand back and see Christ's earliest years, you see that it's not just about parenting.

It's about the centrality of God's presence in our lives. church. This centrality impacts every human being wherever we are, parents or non-parent.

Titus 2 says that the church is a family where all of us bear the spiritual responsibility, y'all, bear the spiritual responsibility for the spiritual growth of others in the family of God.

[37 : 43] And some of that, you leave that to the pastors. The pastors do that work, right? I'm just here for the White House donuts back there and a message.

Hallelujah, and I'll be on my way. Well, you don't have to have a significant title, a significant role, other than a Christian to make a significant impact.

God has equipped you with everything you need and everyone around you. You're not insufficient because you don't have kids. You're not insufficient because your kids don't follow the Lord.

You're not insufficient because you're not married or you're having marital struggles and things like that. No, you don't have to be in any significance to make a significant impact.

It's the lesson about these pebbles. As we reflect upon Simeon and Anna, we realize that we don't even need biological children to be spiritual parents of others, to shape the lives of others.

[38 : 44] This is for every believer. Every believer has an opportunity. You see, this passage isn't about parenting. It's about God's presence being central in our lives and proximally within reach for others within our lives.

And even as Leroy and Wally and whoever else is stuck in a hospital bed, even confined to a hospital bed, right where they need to be for a purpose, to be used, for the gospel to reach even the inner walls of an ICU unit, to a mother possibly who's struggling, to a father who's having marital problems and has no hope, maybe on the verge of suicide.

Like, you don't understand the significance of our impact because we get lost in our insignificance. thinking back to the skipping of pebbles upon the water, an impact is an impact, no matter the size, right?

So the question is, what impact are you making? Faithful devotion shapes future faithfulness. Let's pray.