

"MY FATHER'S BUSINESS"

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke 2:49

Not much is recorded in the Scriptures regarding the childhood and youth of Christ, but what is told is certainly full of interest. He lived in Nazareth. In His home the Word of God was honored and obeyed. His mother and Joseph were godly, so their influence over Him was very wholesome.

Christ's body developed in strength and sturdiness. His mental development kept pace with His physical growth. As He advanced in age, stature and wisdom, God's favor toward Him was all the more apparent. All of His powers unfolded in a marvelous fashion, while He enjoyed the normal development of a healthy and happy child.

Our only glimpse into the boyhood of Christ was when He was twelve years of age. Even though Joseph and Mary were poor, and lived many miles from Jerusalem, they were regular and punctual in their attendance when the Feast of the Passover came around. They did not try to find an excuse for not being present in the holy city at that time. They took Jesus Christ with them to the Passover when He was twelve years of age. It was a custom among the Jews that at this feast the boys who had attained the age of twelve were recognized as "sons of the law," and thereafter they were morally and spiritually responsible.

So many thousands went to the feast annually that the city of Jerusalem could not accommodate the huge crowds. At the close of this particular and glorious week the vast crowds started on their homeward journey. That occasion afforded a wonderful opportunity for fellowship. Relatives, who had not met for months, embraced each other; old friendships, long interrupted, were renewed. There was so much to tell and to hear that it was not surprising that parents sometimes travelled several miles without thinking of their children who were accompanying them; not that they were unmindful of their responsibilities, but they considered their youngsters to be quite safe in a company where they had so many relatives and friends. Moreover, it was the custom in those days for men to travel in one group in a large caravan, and women to travel in another group, and the children were permitted to go with the group which they preferred and to play together as they went along. Because of this custom, it was only natural for Joseph and Mary to be free from anxiety even though they did not see the Lord Jesus during the first day of their journey. Alas, people frequently take far too much for granted.

As Joseph and Mary, in company with their relatives and friends, moved away from the city, the boy Jesus, absorbed in new and elevating emotions, remained behind. Joseph and Mary supposed that He was in the company, but He was not there. At eventide, after an entire day's journey, they discovered that He was not with them. They sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. Not finding Him there, they decided to return to Jerusalem and seek to discover His whereabouts. Having to wait until the next morning to start, one can imagine that, after a sleepless night, they were ready to depart quite early.

After three days—one for the journey from Jerusalem, one for the return and one spent in a frantic and fruitless search through the streets of the city—they found the Lord Jesus. Instead of playing with the children about the temple courts, He was in the temple listening to the wise teachers, eagerly asking them questions and surprising them by His marvelous understanding. In a most respectful manner, He listened to the doctors and then propounded His questions to them. His desire to learn all that He could from them about the things of God was most commendable. These eminent teachers were astonished that He should manifest such

a great interest in the deep things of God. They were also amazed at the quickness of His mind in grasping such great truths at that tender age.

Of course, Mary and Joseph were astonished that Christ should venture into such an august presence and converse with the teachers of the Law. Mildly reproving Him for His seeming lack of thoughtfulness for her and Joseph, in remaining behind and causing them so much anxiety and inconvenience, His mother inquired, "Son, why has thou thus dealt with us?" However, her reproach was quite tender, as if she felt sure that He could explain the matter satisfactorily.

Without any attempt to excuse Himself, Christ Jesus gently reproved the inordinate solicitude of Mary and Joseph about Him. His dignified, yet tender, reply constitutes the first words of our Saviour which were recorded. He asked, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" His question implied that His mother should have realized His mission, and should not have expected Him to be anywhere else than about the things of God. He made it clear that, regardless of what any others might do, He intended to be about the business of His heavenly Father. His supreme task was to do the will of His Father. To do the will of His Father was the one guiding principle of His life.

The entire earthly life of Christ shows us what His business was. It may be summed up in the few words, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). To Nicodemus the Lord Himself said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17). This, then, was the "Father's business," and to do it was the Son's delight. He said to His disciples, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

Christ's compulsion in the world was not what the world wanted, even at its best. What higher call can the world make than the call of motherhood? It is a sad day when a child is not willing to do what mother wants. There was no doubt about Christ's love for His mother, but He had a higher compulsion than the wants of His mother. In His statement, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?", our Lord placed Mary where she and all other human beings must stay, secondary to His heavenly Father.

The Christian's compulsion in the world is not to be where the world wants and to do what the world wants, not even when it is at its best. The Christian's compulsion on the Lord's Day is not to stay at home with relatives or friends and entertain them, no matter how dear the relationship may be. The right and the best place for any Christian on the Lord's Day is in God's house. The best business of any Christian is the Father's business. Since our Lord said that He "must be about His Father's business," the same thing should be a must for the Christian.

What were the things of His Father which He was obligated to do?

1. To reveal the Father's character.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18).

2. To proclaim the Father's words.

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received

them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8).

3. To do the Father's work.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not" (John 10:37).

4. To do the Father's will.

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

5. To glorify the Father's name.

"Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28).

6. To bring to the Father's house.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3).

His Father's business was the most important business in the world. The interests which it involves are of superlative importance. Compared with it, all other interests shrivel into insignificance. Christ taught all to put the claims of this business first. The Father's business is the most beneficent business in the world. It was initiated at the dictates of pure love and grace. It is completely free from any taint of selfishness. It does not involve any wreckage. It aims at nothing less than the restoration of people to the fellowship and favor of God.

Moreover, it is the most profitable business in the world. It is profitable for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. It yields tremendous dividends to all its shareholders. Furthermore, it is the most highly capitalized business in the world. The Father's business is never cramped for lack of capital, because the infinite riches of grace, wisdom and power are behind it. The wealth of the Godhead is at the disposal of Christians if they would only draw upon it. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit wait upon our calls.

Be about your Father's business with all earnestness, because that is the way of usefulness. It is sweet employment to work for the Father. If His business is your business, you will be useful in your day and generation. As Christ was under compulsion to be in His Father's house and at His Father's business, so must we be in the same place and at the same task.