

Scripture: Luke 3:23-38

Sermon: "The Son of God"

Text: Luke 3:23a & 38b ---"...the son of Joseph"---"...the son of God."

Proposition: Because children's morality and knowledge of God are developed chiefly through the example and teachings of older persons around them, each adult has the responsibility to do his best to be an influence for good and for God, just as Joseph did for Jesus.

Dates written: Jan. 7-12, 1974

Dates and places used:

Jan. 13, 1974. OAKLAND PARK, FL.

1944-1945

"The Son of God"

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Introduction:

1. During a Sunday school class, the teacher asked seven-year-old Johnny to finish the quotation, "Cast thy bread upon the waters..."

With much enthusiasm the boy answered, "...and you'll be arrested for polluting."

(True, 2-73)

This boy may not have learned the Bible as well as the teacher had hoped, but he surely had learned from teachers and news mediae (probably TV) about one of the major, much-talked-about modern problems. Youngsters at first have to learn from other people who are older than they are, because everybody is older than they.

2. Jesus as an infant and boy was in that position too. I think that the Scripture which we read is quite confusing unless you look at it as a way in which the Bible writer was saying that the family background and the adults of Jesus' early life were very important in his becoming that which he was in adult life. If you start only with Mary and the virgin birth, what significance is there in relating Jesus' background through

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Joseph? Matthew also gives quite a bit of weight to Jesus' family background through ~~Jesus' father~~ Joseph's lineage, in the first 18 verses of his gospel.

3. Many of us have difficulty thinking of Jesus as the son of Joseph, and have always considered him only "the son of God." The Scripture that we read today begins by speaking of Jesus as "the son of Joseph" (3:23a) and ends by speaking of Jesus as "the son of God." → If you read it without strong bias toward an interpretation you already hold, it may seem to be saying that Jesus became the son of God through first becoming the son of Joseph, and partly because of Joseph's family background through David and others.

4. This approach to or interpretation of the Scripture suggests to me some thinking which is not new, but which ~~I think~~ has some value for all people. It is that because children's morality and knowledge of God are developed chiefly through the example and teachings of older persons around them, each adult has the responsibility

to do his best to be an influence for good and for God, just as Joseph did for Jesus. Let's follow this line of thought, with the help of our Scripture, perhaps of other Scripture, and of typical life experiences.

I. Through Joseph, his earthly father, Jesus was helped strongly to become the son of God.

1. You may argue that Joseph had nothing to do with Jesus becoming the Son of God, if you believe the virgin birth, for it was all done through Mary. But Scripture from Genesis and from Isaiah, and the references here in Luke and in Matthew, all point to the Christ, the Son of God, as coming through the line of David, and traceable all the way back to Abraham. That tracing is done in Luke and Matthew through Joseph, not through Mary. If Jesus was the Christ, the son of God, who was prophesied in the Old Testament, then he had to be traced through the father's lineage, because that was the only way it was done in those days. Joseph was indispensable in establishing Jesus as the proper one who could be the Messiah, the Christ, the son of God.

2. In the New Testament, no mention is made of Joseph after the visit to the temple when Jesus was 12 years old. Many scholars have read into this that Joseph died before Jesus was a man, and that probably Jesus as the oldest boy in the family had to take care of the family, to make the biggest part of the family living. He was called a carpenter, and Joseph was a carpenter, so the obvious inference is that Jesus learned his trade by which he made this living from his father Joseph.

3. Another not-unreasonable inference could be that Jesus learned much more than carpentry from Joseph. His attitudes of understanding and toleration of other people, even of obvious and admitted "bad" people, could have been learned partly, at least, from Joseph. His ability to listen while others talked could have been partly from the example of Joseph. His effectiveness in ministry in the small villages and open countryside of Galilee could have come from the familiarity he gained with such places and people who lived there as he worked with Joseph as a carpenter.

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4. I'll admit that most of this is conjecture, guessing after the fact, but I submit to you that it is reasonable to assume most of this.

I look on this somewhat as a school-boy. When his teacher in elementary school had a birthday, her class joined in the observance. "How old are you?" the students wanted to know.

She gave the conventional answer -- 39.

A boy in the class pondered a while, and then said, "I don't see how you could be 39. My father's 50, and you taught him in the 7th. grade."

(from Quote, $12-30=73$).

I just don't see how you can discount Joseph as being an extremely important factor in the development of Jesus. In every way, the reasoning indicates, Jesus was considered the son of Joseph, and so considered himself. When he came to be known as the son of God, it was because of Joseph, to a large extent.

5. If that was so with Jesus, we are lead to think that

II. Each human individual is dependent upon his parent figures to make

him aware of God and of God's desires for his life.

1. Two staid older ladies usually took their annual Florida vacation in St. Petersburg, but this year they decided to try Ft. Lauderdale instead. One evening, as they were seated in a hotel lobby, an elderly bald-headed gentleman sailed by with a shapely young blonde hanging on his arm. "That's what you get in this place!" snorted one, disapprovingly.

"Yes," agreed the other. "He's down here to get away from it all and she's down here to get it all away from him."

(Funny, Funny World.)

We do not know if the young blonde succeeded in getting all the old gentleman's money, but we do know that a person gets most of his knowledge and values early in life from other people.

2. That is the basic thesis of modern-day psychiatry. It usually seeks to help a person solve his problems by trying to find events and influences in his very early life which were strong factors in molding him to become what he is now. Psychiatry seems to assume that you have a great chance of over-

coming even serious personality problems if you just understand where they came from. Many neurotic and psychotic patients do make good life adjustments when treatment is administered which is based on this premise. On the other hand, many people find that they do not have the strength within them to overcome the effects of the very strong early-life influences which were so crucial in making them as they are.

3. Biblical religion^{ALSO} recognizes the importance of parents and parent figures on a child's development.

a. The early life of Samuel, ^{the} priest and prophet who annointed Saul as the first king of Israel, illustrates the vital effect of both parent and parent figure. Hannah, Samuel's mother, promised God that if she bore a son he would be dedicated to the Lord's work. For her this meant he would become a priest or minister. While he was a child, she took him to Eli, the chief priest, to help Eli and to be trained. Eli became to him as a father, and helped Samuel recognize ^{IN THE NIGHT} the voice as God's when the Lord first spoke prophecy to Samuel.

We see in the story of Samuel the life-long strength of early moral teaching and goal-setting by parents and parent figures.

b. A verse in the Bible book of Proverbs says this well: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6)

4. An authoritative figure in the Roman Catholic Church (whom I cannot now remember) often is quoted as saying "give us a child until he is seven years old and he will always be a Catholic." Traditional Christianity in Protestantism with its emphasis on being reborn into Christ, its stress on "being saved," has not put that much emphasis on early training as far as theory and words are concerned. Yet, effective Protestant churches which reach large numbers of people have strong educational programs which they express through Sunday Schools, youth groups, and private schools.

5. All of this illustrates that

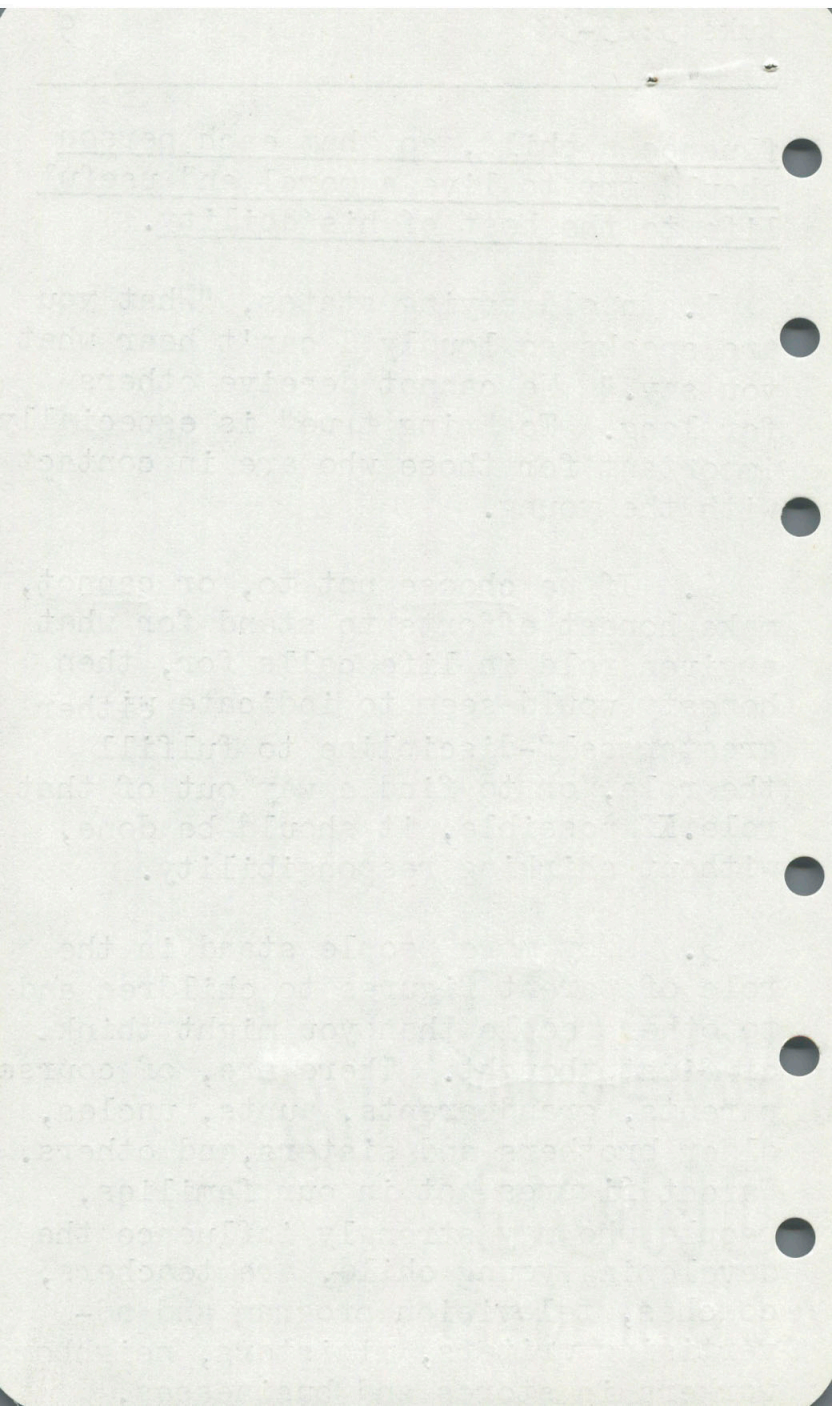
III. Strong responsibility rests upon everyone who is in a position to in-

fluence a child, so that each person should try to live a moral and useful life to the best of his ability.

1. An old saying states, "What you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say." We cannot deceive others for long. To "ring true" is especially important for those who are in contact with the young.

2. If we choose not to, or cannot, make honest efforts to stand for what a given role in life calls for, then honesty would seem to indicate ~~either~~ greater self-discipline to fulfill the role, or to find a way out of that role. ~~If~~ possible, it should be done, without shirking responsibility.

3. Many more people stand in the role of parent figures to children and to other people than you might think. at first thought. There are, of course, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, older brothers and sisters, and others. Parent figures not in our families, people who may strongly influence the developing young child, are teachers, coaches, television program and advertising writers, ministers, neighbors, workers in stores and businesses,



policemen, and many others. Unless you withdraw from life quite fully, like a hermit or an invalid, you probably influence the developing character of somebody, whether you realize it or not. Don't you want to be a good influence?

Conclusion:

1. A teenager by the name of Michael got a job in a bank. The cashier tossed him a package of one dollar bills and said: "Check them to make sure there one hundred."

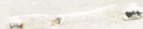
Michael started counting. Finally, he got up to 56, 57, 58, then he threw the package in the drawer. "If it's right this far," he remarked to the man next to him, "it's probably right all the way."

(Quote, 12-30-73)

2. Michael jumped to a conclusion which may not have been justified by the facts, but I think that our conclusion here is factual and true. It is this: Because children's morality and knowledge of God are developed chiefly through the example and teachings of older persons around them, each adult has the responsibility to

do his best to be an influence for good
and for God, just as Joseph did for
Jesus.

3. "The son of Joseph" became the
"son of God." Like Joseph, you and I
can help children to know God, too.



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that is Joseph did for

James

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of God, like Joseph, you are
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