

01.05.25

Luke

Chapter 2 - A Most Unusual Advent
Unassuming Magnificence (vs.39-52)

Luke 2:39-52: When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the

midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

One of the questions that I think we oftentimes wrestle with is, “What is God like?” And tied right to that is, “What would it be like to be in heaven with Him? What is heaven like?” That we are given pictures in Scripture, it’s important for us to realize that we can't come in with our

own preconceived notions. I mean, unfortunately we have artists, some secular, some “religious” that have painted things and caused certain pictures to be etched in our minds about the way that things are, the way that things look. We've often had people proclaim things about God that really are not Scriptural. One of the things I love about going in and just simply digging, because obviously, as John comes on the scene, he says, “You need to repent,” which means you need to think differently because you already have these preconceived notions about what everything is like, and God says, “Ok, just erase that. Now just let Me tell you what it's like.” And as you go through the Gospels, you begin to realize that it's a totally different picture. In some cases, you need to kind of stand back from the text and look at the panoramic view in order to really take in what God is saying in these wonderful places in which He begins to describe the person of Christ. If you think about the Old Testament and you read through the Old Testament, I've had people comment, “Well, God seems pretty upset or pretty angry most the time, or He seems like He's thinking this way.” And I said, “So, let me ask you this. If you were

to put Jesus in that place, would you redefine who God is?" And they would say, "Yeah, I would redefine who God is." Well, Hebrews 1 says that Jesus is the exact representation of the nature of God. So, when it says the word became flesh and dwelt among us, it's literally saying that God came in the flesh, and if you really want to know Him, look at Jesus because He is literally explaining Him and that's exactly what it says in John 1. He explains Him. So, if you want to get a clear picture of God and you want to get a clear picture of what heaven is like, then you have to erase all those other thoughts and just simply come into "What does it say?"

As we come to this passage, as we've been going through the Gospel of Luke in particular, what we've been seeing is this is an unlikely bunch of people to have the 1st row seat in the greatest event that ever happened because you have an older couple that albeit they've been striving to do the right thing, but here they are, an old couple and it seems as if God has withheld the very thing they want the most, and that's a child. So, immediately in the Gospel

of Luke, he introduces us to this couple that have had their desires withheld from them, and our thoughts are “maybe it doesn't really pay to do the right thing,” but God then begins to reveal that no, this is one of the ones that are going to be on the front row seat. I mean, He takes a young couple that are engaged and from what we understand, the husband is what is called a proletarian, which means that he's a common worker. He is a carpenter as Scripture will tell us. This couple lives in a town kind of north of Jerusalem, about 60 miles north, and it's called Nazareth. It's actually lived in by more Gentiles probably than Jews at this time, though they have a synagogue. The thought is that here this young couple lives in obscurity and is at best a commoner, probably struggling paycheck to paycheck to deal with particular issues. I think it's pretty interesting that God will ultimately call them to be taxed even more, but God calls that couple in their faithfulness, and Luke will expose us to shepherds keeping watch in their fields.

I was talking to Connie this last week and you know, you look on the lawns and you see the Nativity scene and

inevitably you see the kings there and I'm going, "The kings weren't there at the nativity scene." But you inevitably see it. I hate to say it, but I actually bought her a Nativity set that had the kings in it. But the point is, it was just the shepherds, and the audience was just these poor hard-working people that God sees, and He goes, "And you get a front row seat." And then He takes this older man that's been looking for the coming of the Christ, and He goes, "And you come." He's been faithful. He's been there. Then, there's this woman by the name of Anna, and she's been a widow for a long time. But it seems as if she hasn't forgotten, in the sense of her husband, she hasn't remarried, but she's devoted herself to serving the Lord through all those years. The thought of all these people as they're introduced is, you're going, "Well, these are fundamentally a list of nobodies." And God goes, "Nobodies to you, but somebodies to Me." Because what we see in all their lives is a fidelity of faithfulness in the things that they've been doing. What we see in all of their lives is a desire to see God and to have a walk with God. A lot of times, those things aren't overt. They're not always obvious, and most the time,

these people are not in grand and glorious places. So, the very introduction of the Gospel of Luke is showing us these interesting things.

I recall the prophecy of the Old Testament; in particular, if you were to take the Book of Isaiah, and you were to go through the Book of Isaiah, one of the greatest books of prophecy, dealing with the coming of Christ, it begins to reveal to you things that you wouldn't normally expect. Isaiah 7 says He's going to be born a virgin. Isaiah 9 says He's going to be born, and who's going to see this bright light? Well, he's going to say the people in Galilee are going to see it. He's going to do a lot of walking around in Galilee and Capernaum is where He's going to live, which is right there on the coast of Galilee. So, it begins to describe places that you wouldn't naturally think that He was going to be or things that He was going to do. Of course, He will live in Nazareth, which is, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

As you go on in the Book of Isaiah, you'll read something like in Isaiah 11 that He's going to be like a shoot coming up from the ground from the lineage of David. Then as

you go on in Chapter 42, the way that His demeanor is going to be in such a way that He wouldn't put out a smoldering wick. It's an interesting description given to Him in that particular passage. Scripture refers to Him as "my Servant," which you go, "Wow, I wouldn't think that His title would be "my Servant." Would you think of it being that way?

So, by the time you come to Isaiah 53, you're taken back, and let me have you turn there. It's a familiar passage that you all know, probably fairly well, but Isaiah 53 really kind of starts off with, "Who's going to believe this?"

(Isaiah 53:1) "Who has believed our message?"

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?"

(Isaiah 53:2) For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,

And like a root out of parched ground..."

That's an interesting description, isn't it? If you've ever been in a desert place; we actually, this last year were in the desert in the salt flats and you're hard pressed to find anything growing, but if you do it kind of sticks out and that's an interesting picture.

Then, it goes on and says,

“... He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him...”

Scripture is kind of preparing you. You're not going to be thinking He's the guy. Everything that you might be thinking about God needs to be erased, and you need to think differently. You need to come before God and you say, “How about this? I'll let You define You instead of me defining You.”

“... He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.”

Oh yeah, by the way, He's not going to be really popular with the upper echelon. He's going to be despised and ultimately by all. I mean, it's truly preparing us for these things, isn't it?

In Isaiah 61, it starts off in this chapter,

(Isaiah 61:1) “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted...”

It doesn't sound like He's going down the ivory halls of academia, does it?

“... He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;

(Isaiah 61:2) To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,

(Isaiah 61:3) To grant those who mourn in Zion,
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”

And what's interesting is the Gospel of Luke will actually record this particular text. It will record Jesus reading it in the synagogue in Nazareth. At first, of course, the perception is these are wonderful words of life, and then Jesus at that moment, begins pointing out, “But you won't receive that it's Me.” And then it's at that time that they take Jesus, and they put Him on the cliff, and they try to

kill Him. There He is in His hometown and they're getting ready to kill Him. What we realize is that obviously Jesus is not trying to cater to people, and He'll oftentimes say things that go against what I would say man's natural religion would embrace. There are things that begin to happen that you go, "Wow, I didn't see it that way before." And that's in a way what I'm wanting you to think through. Especially as we come to this in this passage, as we see Jesus as a child growing and that and of itself is pretty bizarre when you think that the Messiah would have to grow at all.

Hebrews 5 tells us that He learned obedience. Of course, when did the Christ ever have to obey? He's God; He's the Creator of the universe, that He would have to learn obedience. So, as we come to this passage, we're going to see some magnificent things. Now, when I think of magnificent, I think of maybe elephants levitating, but I don't think necessarily of somebody that is humble. Yet, Scripture is going to reveal that this is God Almighty and something magnificent is happening. He's fulfilling all the Law, though He is the maker of the Law. When one of the

disciples came up to Jesus and he says, "So, what do we have to do? We have to pay these temple taxes?" And Jesus goes, "Get the money out of the fish's mouth." And then He turns, and He goes, "So, who owns the temple? Who's in charge of the temple? Whose temple is it?" He goes, "Well, basically yours." He goes, "Yeah, but I'm going to pay it anyway." And you go, "That's magnificent." So, there going to be some things that are magnificent within the passage that you wouldn't normally perceive as magnificent.

I want you to pick up with me here in Luke 2:39,

"When they had performed everything according to the Law..."

Which, by the way, has been a repeated theme throughout. In other words, God works in the realm of obedience and when you and I have submitted and subjected ourselves to what He says then God begins to work in our life. I know that sometimes we try to make deals with God and say, "You show me some magnificent stuff for me and give me basically what I want, and I'll tell You whether or not I want to do what You say." And God

goes, “How about this? How about you start doing what I say and watch Me take care of you?” So, it’s kind of a different way of thinking, isn't it?

“When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.”

Luke keeps bringing up this Nazareth thing to let us know these are commoners. These are people in a Gentile world, basically, in that particular realm. Yet they've been faithful to take the 60, 65 mile trek every time they need to go into Jerusalem, to do the things that they need to do. Then, they go back home, and the guy needs to go back to work, and somebody’s got to feed the donkey, you know? Things have to be done.

(Luke 2:40) “The Child continued to grow...”

What an interesting phrase it is. Once again, we're dealing with the Messiah. We're dealing with the Creator of the universe, and it actually uses the phrase, “the Child continued to grow.” Now, the phrase here and I just want to emphasize is in what is called the active sense, which means that the Christ child is putting in effort. Now, I

know that growing in height, there's not a whole lot we control in that, but it's not referring as much to that as it is that He's making a decision to grow. In other words, He's making a decision, and another word you can put in there is "to increase" or become greater. That Christ could actually become greater, He could increase in something is a magnificent thought when you think about it. It reminds me of Daniel in Daniel 1, where it says that Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself. Now, it's saying that he made up his mind that he would increase, that he would be greater, that he would continue. As Daniel was growing, he was becoming more resolved in the things that he was doing, and he was making a commitment.

I couldn't help but think of an individual that I grew up with when I was young. I was about 10 or 11 and the guy that I grew up with, he lived in the neighborhood not too far away, was about 11-12, a little bit older than me. This particular individual, I'm not going to say his name, but he made-up his mind in first grade that he would never make less than an "A" in any of his subjects. I thought, "Wow,

that's pretty interesting." So anyway, I was with him all the way through high school, and he never made less than "A". In fact, I remember one teacher gave him an "A-," and he went to her and got it changed because she found out she was wrong in one of the things that she marked. I thought that was pretty interesting. His parents really didn't know what to do with him because he's one of those really smart guys, but he had built this like clubhouse in the back, about 10x20. I mean there was physics, there were math problems on the boards. There were all these chemicals that he had lined up and periodically, he would blow things up, but he was an interesting guy. I remember thinking, he made up his mind that he was going to really put his mind to something, and he was resolved. I know very few people that were resolved as much as he was. When he finally graduated from high school, he went to West Point, actually became great in West Point. Then strangely enough, decided to be a lawyer, and went into the stock market, made millions of dollars, and things such as this. As I oftentimes think about him, I think in terms of how he had made a resolve to do something, and it is kind of

an interesting picture here that Christ made a resolve that He was going to grow. Now, because it's in the active sense, it means that He's the one making the decision.

So, the way it reads is,

(Luke 2:40) “The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom...”

“Become strong” and “increasing in wisdom” is in what is called the passive, which means that was given to Him. So, He made the decision to grow, but the strength and the wisdom were from God.

So, the passage goes on and says,

“... and the grace of God was upon Him.”

In other words, that's the result; the fact that He was stronger and that He was with Him. The same thing that you see in the Book of Daniel, Daniel 1, he made up his mind and then God gave them wisdom, and He gave them knowledge greater than all the people in Babylon.

The passage is telling us that this sense of desire is a magnificent thing. Maybe something that you wouldn't think is something that you need to really focus on, but

God looks upon it in a great way. To God, this is what's great to Him. I mean, you think about all the things that are on the earth, the things that we could produce, the things that we could invent or the things that we could perhaps impress somebody with, and none of them would impress God because it would be less than a speck in the presence of the Divine. I mean, Scripture says, (Isaiah 40:7) “All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.”

So, that pretty well sums it up. But what does impress God? Where does He begin to work?

(Luke 2:41) “Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.”

(Luke 2:42) And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast.”

Now, Scripture is putting Him in the context of the Bar Mitzvah age in the sense that according to Jews, I think even today is probably age 13, in which they go into Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah, which would be the girl is at age

12, but you have to realize that there was no Bar Mitzvah until the 6th century. So, we have that sense of He's becoming a man. In fact, at a Bar Mitzvah, one of the things that the young man says is "Today, I have become a man." So, Scripture is wanting us to understand the context of this.

It says,

"...He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast;

(Luke 2:43) and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days..."

Once again, obeying what God had for them and doing the things that God had for them to do.

"... the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it."

Now, Christ in this phrase not only has what seems to be a humble beginning and the fact that He seems to grow, which is kind of a bizarre thought in and of itself, but in this particular verse, it seems to be emphasizing that He has this grand sense of desire and devotion. Now, there's

a contrast in the passage. I don't know if you noticed or not, but it says in verse 41, his parents used to go to Jerusalem every year as a part of the Feast of the Passover, right? Isn't that what they did? Yeah. Then, if you look at the end of verse 42, that was according to their custom. Scripture is now giving us a differentiation and a distinction of something that really catches the eyes of God, and that is somebody doing something that wasn't just according to custom but goes beyond custom. As John 2 will remind us, the zeal of the Lord consumed Him. So, what we have is this desire and devotion that goes beyond mere custom. You know when you're engrossed in something, and you really love something, you have to pull somebody away from that because you can't just say, "Well, your time's up." "What do you mean my time is up? I've got to have more." Scripture throughout is giving us this sense of what really is magnificent in this, and as we've been going through the Gospel of Luke, what we've been reading is that those that He calls, they're a very unlikely bunch, but maybe we're not looking at things right; maybe we're not perceiving the things that are most valuable in the

heavens. So, we see this grand devotion in His life, and if you go on,

(Luke 2:44) “but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day’s journey; and they began looking for Him...”

I hate to say it, but I'm embarrassed that we actually at one time left our kids at church and went home and found out that they weren't in the car. I can empathize with them.

“... and went a day’s journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.”

And that’s the thought, “Maybe He’s with somebody else, maybe with family.”

(Luke 2:45) “When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him.

(Luke 2:46) Then, after three days...”

“Three” seems to be an interesting number.

“... they found Him in the temple...”

I would think that would be the first place they would be looking for Him, but it doesn't seem to be. Let me just say this. If in fact it's been 3 days and they did a day's journey

back, so they still had some extra time, and it seems like it took them a little while to find Him.

“Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.”

Now, what we have here is a very inquisitive person, and it really displays that searching which we see in Proverbs 2 in particular, that desires it like gold. It's like you're searching for treasures, right? It's that same kind of heart, and it's the questions that begin to reveal that He's looking for something more here, and He begins to talk to them, and He's listening; not only asking the questions but listening to them in the passage. He's sitting in the midst of the teachers. I mean, what 12-year-old does that? And He's listening to them and He's asking them questions. I think the interesting thing about the guy that I grew up with is that he would sit around talking with these professors and they were going, “I didn't know that.” And there are things that Jesus was doing that was wowing even them. But I think what's even more wowing within the passage is His inquisitive nature and His

insatiable desire for attaining more understanding. It's part of that picture, "and He grew." This is Him growing.

(Luke 2:47) "And all who heard Him were amazed..."

Literally, they were beside themselves. That would be the text according to the Greek. They were beside themselves. They couldn't understand why or how this kid could do this. What were they amazed at? Well, if you look at the passage, it says they were "amazed at His understanding and His answers." In other words, He was responding in such a way they're going, "I not only think this kid knows these things I think He understands these things." The Greek word that is used within the passage for "understanding" is actually an interesting word that is used in Homer's Odyssey in the Greek language. And it is a word that is used to describe two rivers flowing in together. It's a picture of information and application flowing in, in the sense of He not only has the wherewithal, but He also knows how to use it, and He begins to describe these things. Now let me just say this, that His grasp and His understanding is a result of His desire. This friend that I grew up with, let me tell you, he

took out time to study, and he wasn't going to let go of it tenaciously. He wasn't going to let go of it till he completely understood it. You begin to realize this is an act that is magnificent in the eyes of God, because you could see the hunger. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.” What does that look like? We're actually seeing what it looks like within the passage, and He begins to grasp it.

(Luke 2:48) “When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.””

Of course, I think at this juncture, He probably perceives himself as a man.

(Luke 2:49) “And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?””

“I'm a man now, and it's now a Me and Him type thing. Why would you be looking for me?” Well, they didn't understand this statement. It's a magnificent statement. It's hard to understand because it's not our way of

thinking, but the point of the passage is that somehow, strangely enough, He's willing to be misunderstood even by those around Him, by those that are beloved by Him for a greater and higher cause, and that is having a relationship with God. It's one of the things that's magnificent in God's sight.

There are times that you and I are going to be misunderstood about the things that we do and misunderstood by people that we love and people that we perceive would be most on our side, and God says, "Are you willing to be misunderstood for a greater and higher calling?" There's an interesting picture there in 1 Samuel 1 with Hannah as she begins to cry out and pray to God and the priest goes, "What are you, drunk?" And there are times that God calls us to do things that it's obvious that people are going to misconstrue. I mean, people misconstrue what Jesus did on the cross. I mean, "He must not be a doctor, otherwise He could heal Himself. He must not be who He said He was. Why is He crying out to Elijah?" He wasn't crying out to Elijah. He was crying out to His Father, but almost everything, when

you consider what He was doing at that particular moment, was misunderstood. I think one of the magnificent things that God is looking for is a willingness of somebody to desire Him so much, to be willing to be misunderstood by those that are around them. If in fact you are wholehearted in this, you're going to be misunderstood.

If you go on in the passage, you begin to see that his parents come to Him, and they go, "Look, we don't understand what's going on."

(Luke 2:51) "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them..."

Once again, Hebrews 5, "He learned obedience." I think that's a magnificent point in the sense that He's clearly right in doing what He's doing. Nevertheless, He will submit to His parents to fulfill the Law of God. Being willing to be misunderstood, being willing to submit yourself. I mean, you really don't see an argument within the passage of Jesus going to His parents, "Um, I don't think you guys understand who I am." There's none of

that dialogue at all. It's just, "Sure, Mom. Sure, Dad." And He goes with them. These are magnificent qualities.

Now, the reason I kind of took this at a pretty quick pace is that I want to show you something in Isaiah 66. If you turn there with me, Isaiah says something that is really earth shattering if in fact you completely comprehend what he's saying. When I consider heaven, and I consider being in the presence of God, and I consider what it's like to be an audience of, we'll call them "the greats," and because certainly heaven is a magnificent, incomprehensible, glorious place; there's no doubt about that, but the thing that I think we misunderstand is really what heaven is like. In some ways, when you see God in the flesh walking among us, you begin to realize, "I think I've misunderstood what heaven was like. I've over complicated this whole thing." And I think in many respects it's one of the reasons why people wrestle with going to heaven. "I know Christ died for me, but I don't know what heaven is like." Heaven seems a little scary to them, and listen, in some ways, I blame the artists. What have the artists done for us? They have us looking at

pictures of these, I would call them “milquetoast people” that are basically soft, delicate individuals in these clouds, plucking harps, and the thought is that we're in this nebulous, ethereal state of just bouncing around from cloud to cloud and this is heaven. I'm going, “Not the one I read about.” But God wants us to see what is important in the heavens as well as what heaven is like. Let me just say this too, you have to consider the kind of people Jesus hung around with to also get a clear picture. I mean, when I think of James and John and these guys are calling down fire; they want to off these people. We don't have a group of perfect people. When we when we come to Scripture, somehow it gets distorted in the sense that to be a Christian, to be a follower of God, you've got to be this this saintly looking individual that almost walks two feet above ground and you're you walk on air, kind of floating across, but those are the Pharisees and the Scribes. The people that Jesus was walking around with were people like James and John; people like Peter, who will draw a sword and cut off somebody's ear. You'll deal with a zealot that is trying to attack people, and you'll deal with a tax collector that's trying to collect money.

You're dealing with average normal people, and that Jesus is hanging around these guys; of all the people to hang around, why is He hanging around these people? What Scripture is revealing to us and one of the things that we're seeing even in the Book of Luke is, it seems unlikely, but the point is that they're very genuine people. So, a lot of times the people that are very genuine, are very real when you look at them, maybe from a distance, they don't look too impressive, but when you talk with them, you realize this is a person of character. This is a person of integrity. This is a person that really feels deeply about things. This is a person that's willing to sacrifice. This is a person that's willing to serve. Though they are not perfect in so many ways, yet you can see clearly in their heart that these are genuine people. So, the audience that you have are basically outspoken, perhaps straightforward, very transparent people that Jesus begins to hang around.

Isaiah 66 starts off this way,

(Isaiah 66:1) “Thus says the LORD,

“Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool...””

“So, what are you going to do for Me?” I mean when He puts it that way, I'm trying to figure out what I could actually make for Him, and the answer is pretty much nothing.

(Isaiah 66:2) “For My hand made all these things...”

Once again, it goes to the fundamentals, “If I wanted something, I’d pop it into being.”

“... Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD.

“But to this one I will look...”

Now, this is the whole game changer. See, this changes everything. I mean, this kind of knocks everybody out of their nebulous cloud and everybody from their plucking harps and they go, “Ok, so, who do you want to hang around?” And I can just see Christ going, “Well, first of all, I lived in Nazareth. I was born in a lean-to and they placed Me in a feeding trough, and that was My divine plan. I'd rather be around shepherds than be around scholars.” I mean, He's telling us who He is.

“To whom will I look?”

(Isaiah 66:2) “...To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

What you have is a whole different breed of people; people that you can't judge from the external, but people that you can see. I'm going to tell you what I think heaven is like. I don't want to detract from God's glory at all. I mean, God is magnificent. He's glorious, there's no doubt about that, and I think there are going to be moments where we just literally close our mouths and say, “It's just glorious just sitting in front of Him.” But I believe that we're going to be in each other's company and it's going to be like there's no sense of barriers at all. No different than Jesus with His disciples just sitting down at the table. I mean, why does He give this interesting picture of Him sitting down at the table with His disciples and they're just eating, and one guy's leaning on Him? Why does He give us that picture? He's given us a picture of heaven. He's given us a picture of what the relationships are and He's showing us what's really important to Him. I think one of the most fantastic things that's actually going to happen when we get to heaven is that we're going to be learning

more stuff. Don't you think that's going to be exciting? I mean, that's the way it's recorded in Ephesians 2, if I can understand it right, that the disciples will learn, they'll be inquisitive (that's us); we'll be transparent and sincere, but it says in Ephesians 2:7 that in the ages to come, God will show us the wealth of His grace. "In the ages to come." Can you imagine just sitting, "Tell me more." "Let Me tell you about this. Let Me tell you about that." Heaven is a wonderful place.

Ephesians 3:10 tells us that we'll actually, in some way, begin to describe to the authorities in heaven, that is to say angelic beings, what the whole grace thing is about. So, we're not only going to be listeners, but we're also going to be teachers. It seems as if it's just a place in which there's this grand acceptance and this love for everyone and nobody seems to be put on any kind of pedestal except God, and we come and rejoice together. God is looking for those that are humble and contrite in spirit. As you go through the Gospel of Luke, it's just the simplicity of relationship that we're seeing over and over and over again. Who are the people that Luke's going to

be pulling out? And we're going to say once again, "That's an unlikely person." And Luke says, "That's exactly who we see." Because man looks at the outward appearance; God looks at the heart. Though we put so much on the outward appearance, I think one of the grandest things about heaven is that it's going to be full of people that just love each other and are plainspoken and begin to share in ways in which is transparent and true. As Ephesians says, stop lying to one another; speak the truth in love. We're going to have a lot of that in heaven.

So, as we see these interesting pictures, we begin to see what God sees as magnificent. Though, I guess at this stage we'd probably like to see some great miracles by the kid, God is actually displaying right off the bat the greatest magnificence of them all.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we ask that You help us realize what is really important, what You are

looking for, and that's the humbleness and the contrite spirit as we come before You. The fact is that You're not calling people that are perfect. You're calling people that are sinners, and in Your calling us that are sinners, You're the One that's doing the change of our hearts, not us. We're giving You the glory. We're not like the pictures that are painted. We have our failings and our faults and many of us would just assume cut off somebody's ears to look at him. But because we're willing to submit to You, we won't do it. There are things that we think about that clearly are naturally wrong. It's just who we are, but we won't do it because we want to please You. We will submit ourselves; we will submit our strengths, our weaknesses, all that we have. We will lay them at the cross. That's what You're looking for, just somebody that will be true; somebody that will be real; somebody that will be honest and transparent about who they are. Then, somebody that will make a real decision to the degree that they will actually be intense about their pursuit to grow.

Have you made that decision yet? We're not asking you to look more holy than everybody else. We're not asking you to impress anybody else by the wonderful things that you do or the wonderful thoughts that you perceive that you have. We're asking you, are you willing to lay things on the altar and say, "Not my will, but Yours be done"? Are you willing to confess your faults as much as they are; admit them, and then stand up and walk forward? Are you willing to be true?