

In Divine and Human Favor

Luke 2:41-52

Mary's story of Jesus:

We live in Nazareth with my husband Joseph and my children: Jesus, James, Joses, Simon, Judas and my girls. We are not wealthy, but we manage. Let me tell you about my oldest: Jesus. Before his birth I was visited by an angel who said:

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

I went to see my mother's dear friend Elizabeth and she said as I entered the house that she felt her baby leap within her womb, and this is what she said to me:

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

My husband had a dream that I would give birth to a son and we were to name him Jesus and that the child was from the Holy Spirit.

On the night of his birth we were visited by shepherds who told that they had been told of Jesus' birth by an angel and they had heard a heavenly choir singing praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When we went to the temple to dedicate Jesus to God, as God's law requires, we met a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and he said the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. When we brought Jesus in to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss^[h] your servant in peace.
³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

Joseph and I marveled at what was said about Jesus. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed us and said to me:

“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken

against,³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Then we met a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; we learned she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.³⁸ Coming up to us at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

We settled in Nazareth near family and where Joseph was already established in business as a carpenter.

Jesus is a good boy and had been so helpful to me with his brothers and sisters. He can always be counted on to take lunch to his father in the carpenter shop, take a message to a neighbor, watch the bread, help in the garden, or watch the babies when I need a helping hand. But I tell you there was one time that boy almost frightened us to death.

He was a teenager: young Jesus was hasty, seemingly oblivious of the impact his actions have on others. Jesus separated himself from us, his earthly parents and without telling us decided to dedicate himself to the service of his heavenly "Father" (2:48-49). Although we had been told that Jesus would be the savior and

Messiah, those words come as a surprise, even a shock. Here Jesus "looked like something less than the son of our dreams."

However, Jesus had an innate sense of the divine wisdom that exceeds that of normal human beings like us. Jesus had a profound comprehension of the law (v. 47), his pronouncement that he would naturally be found in his "Father's house" (v. 49), and his growth in "wisdom" (v. 52), showed us and affirmed him as one who unusually reflects, even basks in, the divine wisdom. When we told our rabbi of the discovery of Jesus in the temple, he said: "For it is there that the Son of God is found. If you ever seek the Son of God, look first in the temple; hasten thither. There you will find Christ, the Word and Wisdom—that is, the Son of God."

We are doing our best to keep his feet rooted firmly on the ground. We have raised Jesus to understand his family duties and to follow the customs and traditions of Judaism (vv. 41-42). Jesus' observance and obedience have shown that he is a good son. We try to teach him that God can be found even in difficult familial circumstances. God's wisdom is available to the young as well as to the old, which means that we must make room for God to surprise us with unexpected revelations given by unusual messengers. It teaches us that though God's wisdom and holiness remind us of our limitations, it is precisely within these limitations that wisdom is often revealed. God's wisdom enters our lives in all

its contradictions, so that nothing is left without transformation and transfiguration, if we listen to and follow God's wisdom.

I share my story because we often feel that we are the only ones going through something. If you talk to other parents you will find that you are not alone! You may be dealing with young children, or teenagers, or young adults, or maybe even older adults, as parents we keep helping them to grow in Divine and Human Favor, because that is our job as parents. I'm sure I will continue to learn a great deal from this precious gift from God! I pray you find hope. We are not a family perfectly ordered and without division or differences. Rather, we are a family that lives into messy moments with the confidence that God in Jesus has entered and redeems us from within. **William J. Danaher Jr.**

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