

The secret of submission Luke 2:39-51

Proposition: Submission is the pathway to true humility and true Christ likeness

You and I, I believe are living in peculiar times. Always in previous generations the parents guide the children and expected to direct the children as to what to do and what to wear etc. Sadly today in many modern cultures the children are in control and even in some educational institutions education itself is child directed.

One of the most common complaints among modern employers when they employ this generation of young adults is that they are arrogant. Many new employees are proud and demanding of their rights and are not good at taking direction.

Many marriages fail because one of the spouses is not getting what they feel they should out of the marriage.

Many people jump from church to church because they don't like what they hear.

We live in this day an age and because we are in it maybe we can't see how weird our behaviour actually is. But if you talk to our seniors they will tell you that kiwis are much less respectful and much more arrogant than ever before. That kiwis today don't want to be led or directed by anyone. In fact if some one in authority above us gives us a direction the most natural response is to do the opposite.

Our culture is in stark conflict with the teachings and example of the Jesus Christ.

As we open the gospel of Luke again this morning I want to invite you to look at the example of Jesus, and his attitude to his step dad and mum. In this passage you will see that the Lord demonstrated a lifestyle for us that is so counter-cultural today. And I want to make the very unkiwi suggestion that humility is one of the most goldly characteristics any of us can ever attain and that the pathway to true Christ-like humility is through biblical submission.

We are skipping over the Christmas story which we will go back to in a few weeks and picking up Dr Lukes' meticulous account of Jesus' life in *Luke 2:39-51*

39. After Joseph and Mary had done everything that the Law of the Lord commands, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. 40. The child Jesus grew. He became strong and wise, and God blessed him. 41. Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for Passover. 42. And when Jesus was twelve years old, they all went there as usual for the celebration. 43. After Passover his parents left, but they did not know that Jesus had stayed on in the city. 44. They thought he was travelling

with some other people, and they went a whole day before they started looking for him. 45. When they could not find him with their relatives and friends, they went back to Jerusalem and started looking for him there. 46. Three days later they found JESUS sitting in the temple, listening to the teachers and asking them questions. 47. Everyone who heard him was surprised at how much he knew and at the answers he gave. 48. When his parents found him, they were amazed, His mother said, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been worried, and we have been searching for you!" 49. Jesus answered, "Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?" 50. But they did not understand what he meant. 51. Jesus went back to Nazareth with his parents and obeyed them....

Kiwis' don't like taking instruction or being given a lead but for any of us to become more and more like Jesus we find that we are called to a life-style of submission. Which as I shall show you is a profoundly powerful life style.

In this account of Jesus' life Joseph, Mary and Jesus had made the arduous journey to Jerusalem for the Passover festival and they were all travelling home as a large family group when Joseph and Mary noticed that Jesus wasn't with them. So the next day they head back to Jerusalem and on the third day they find him sitting in the temple asking the teachers there the most amazing questions and giving to them the most profound insights. These rabbis are just gob smacked with this young 12yr old boy.

When Joseph and Mary find him, Mary says something a little bit strange. She seems to have forgotten for a second who Jesus' real dad is and she says in verse 48 ***"Son why have you done this to us. Your father and I have been very worried...?"***

Your father? Who was Jesus' Father?

Jesus had no doubt at all re who His Father is and so he responds in vs 49 ***Didn't you know that I would be in my Fathers house?"***

Capital F this time for Father.

You theologians and Laidlaw and Carey students way well ask the question when did Jesus realize that he was God the Son because clearly by 12 there was no doubt in his mind at all.

Psalm 22 is a prophetic psalm about the Messiah and I feel it gives us some insight.

Psalm 22: 9 You, Lord brought me safely through birth, and you protected me when I was a baby at my mothers breast.

10. From the day I was born, I have been in your care, and from the time of my birth you have been my God.

This messianic prophecy is basically saying that the Messiah, Jeshua will know that he is messiah from the day he is born.

How is that possible you may ask.

Firstly doctors tell us that once a baby, a foetus reaches ten weeks of age in the womb it can recognize its mothers voice.

When old Elizabeth heavily pregnant with Jesus' cousin John the Baptist met Mary now pregnant with Jesus, John in the womb recognized who Jesus was and leapt within Elizabeth.

Now I can't explain how it all works except to say that from 10 weeks after conception a foetus has a personal intellectual awareness and taking John's reactions into consideration – possibly a spiritual awareness as well. Helpful insights as we discuss the issue of abortion with others.

Personally, I think that Jesus always knew who he was.

And clearly here at 12 in the temple his response demonstrated that.

Didn't you know that I would be in my Fathers house?

Now I would like not just the children and the youth but everyone of us to notice what is recorded about Jesus next.

Vs51 Jesus went back to Nazareth with His parents and obeyed them...

History records that that sentence describes Jesus' life all the way through until he was 30 years old and moved out of home.

Jesus obeyed his parents. He submitted to them. He respected and allowed them to lead him.

Here's the shocking thing.

At 12 years of age Jesus already knew more about life, death, creation, eternity, humanity than his step dad and Mary would ever know. At 12 years of age he was much more knowledgeable, much brighter, much more dynamic than they would ever be and yet he followed their instructions and obeyed them.

Please listen to this children and young people and family, because God wants to develop a counter culture in our hearts that reflects the life of Jesus to this lost and dying world.

Jesus was much brainier, more knowledgeable, more everything than his parents and yet he took guidance from them and obeyed them as he lived under their roof until he was 30 years of age.

Children, young adults, if you truly want to be like Jesus you need to learn to submit to your parents, to take guidance from them and to obey them. Even if you think that you are more intelligent, more gifted, more knowledgeable than them. Even if you think that you are better than them in some way.

Jesus taught us all to submit ourselves to people who have been put in authority over us.

Paul wrote to the church at ***Ephesus 6:1 Children, you belong to the Lord, and you do the right thing when you obey your parents. The first***

commandment with a promise says “Obey your father and mother, and you will have a long and happy life.”

Yeh, but you say Russell you don't know my parents. They scream and yell and they are so mean to me.

The fact remains that Jesus is the model and the Scriptures don't tell us to honour your mother and father 'if they are worthy.' The Bible says just do it.

Now I have very good parents and had good grandparents and so obeying, respecting, taking guidance from my parents even at the age I am now has never been a difficult thing to do but I have seen plenty of other people whose parents are mean and unfair and selfish. And when I have witnessed their Christian children showing them respect and honour and support I have to say I know each time that I am witnessing something very godly. In Raetihi nearly all the maori women I knew personally had been sexually abused by family members, many of the boys had been severely disciplined and yet as Christians they were respectful and caring of their parents. That to me is an example of true godliness.

We don't submit to and support and respect parents because they are perfect parents but because Jesus modelled it and the bible teaches it. Still in the letter to the church in Ephesus. Ephesians 5:21 we are told as Christians to submit to each other out of our reverence for Christ.

Vs 22 goes on to say wives submit to your husbands. Vs 25 goes on to say husbands serve your wives and be willing to die for them.

Everyone is told to submit to each other effectively.

In Genesis 1:26 we read that God made 'them' (being Adam and Eve) and gave them joint authority over the world.

Back in Ephesians we are told that employees must be submitted to their employers.

Vs5” .. you must obey your earthly masters. Show them great respect and be as loyal to them as you are to Christ.”

Employees submit to your employers. Yeh, but they are old codgers. They have out of date business practices. I am brighter than them. So what?

If you want to become more and more like Jesus, submit to them, allow them to guide you without complaining, obey them. When everyone else is back stabbing them in the lunchroom, don't join in, instead speak well of them when you can. Wherever you can help them succeed. That is what a Christian employee should look like.

In the Baptist movement of church's we have learnt to be mutually submissive to each other and to allow our leaders to lead. It's very, very rare in a Baptist church to find some one trying to bully other church

members around to maybe wanting to call themselves some special title like 'bishop'. Suffice it to say that in church's also there is to be a lead ability, a respecting.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and do what they say. They are watching over you, and they must answer to God. So don't make them sad as they do their work. Make them happy. Otherwise, they won't be able to help you at all.

Latter on Paul would also write to one of his trainee pastors Titus and after giving a long list of instructions on how the church should behave he says ***Titus 2:15 Teach these things as you use your full authority to encourage and correct people. Make sure you earn everyone's respect.*** So it seems Titus was to encourage the people to live the right way and correct the people if they were going off track.

Its interesting to look at what the word Disciple means. Jesus said go into the whole world and make disciples, baptise them then teach them to do all that I have taught you to do.

We are to make disciples.

A disciple by definition means disciplined one. A person who can take instructions and carry them out.

You and I are called to be disciples and to make disciples, to receive encouragement and discipline and to give encouragement and discipline. I believe that this amazing, godly quality of humility that screams Jesus is alive in us to the world comes from an attitude and a life style of submission.

Submission is the pathway to humility. Because there will be times when you will know more than your parents (on certain issues), there will be times when you know more than your spouse about a topic, there will be times when you know more than your employer about some aspect of the business, there will be times when you know more than the pastor and elders on some issues. And when you do, there is the opportunity to respect and support and submit to them and to grow.

I wonder some times if after we have prayed Lord I want to be more like you; maybe God says alright, I'll answer that prayer.

I am going to allow you to be in that company, or married to that person or brought up in that family or linked to that fellowship so that I can teach you humility.

In any type of relationship there are going to be differences of opinion and differences of style and approach. You might have all the right answers, you might have more knowledge and ability than your parents or spouse or employer or church leaders but that is not the real issue.

The real issue is not who has got the right answer it's a matter of being the right person. **It's not a matter of having the right answer but of being the right person.**

At home Daniel and I co-own and extremely arrogant rainbow lorikeet. He is the opposite of humble. A month ago he was hopping around the deck and our cat came up on the deck. The mad bird who thinks he's the greatest living creature in west ak charged the cat screeching its disapproval and the cat leapt three metres through the air off the deck. Often in the lounge the bird will run up to the dog that is resting on the floor and bite the dog on the nose. He is an arrogant little bird – and maybe slightly short in the intelligence stakes but Ben's dog Roxy is the epitome of humble. Roxy is not the least bit scared of the bird. Roxy could polish off that bird in a couple of chomps but she doesn't she controls the strength and power she has in her body which is about 100x bigger than the bird and she has very powerful jaws, and yet she chooses to walk away from Indy the mad parrot. Submission is not weakness it's the ability to control the authority and power that we have so that we do the right thing, so that we are the right person.

Your parents aren't perfect, your spouse isn't perfect, your employer isn't perfect, your pastor and elders are not perfect. Non of that is the issue.

The issue is that we get to control our words and actions so that our attitude is like Jesus' was to his imperfect inferior parents.

But you say Russell, if I support my parents, my employer my spouse the way you are saying we can, what if they lead me up the garden path, what if they make stupid decisions that effect my life.

One story in closing. An amazing story which you can look up during the week if you want to in Genesis 12 and 20. Abraham is often called the father of faith and he was often a great man of faith. He was married to the very beautiful Sarah. He decides against God's instructions on one occasion to go down to Egypt and as he is approaching the region he begins to get a bit worried and cowardly. He thinks, if Pharaohs' guard see my extremely hot wife they are going to kill me and take her to be a part of Pharaoh's harem. So, this man of God, this Wally on this occasion says to Sarah, if Pharaoh's guard see you and ask you if you are married say no, that you are just my little sister so that my life will be spared. And sure enough this hot mama gets noticed by the guard and they ask her if she is married to Abraham. Obediently she says no and so she is taken to be prepared for Pharaoh's harem. Immediately members of Pharaoh's household begin to get sick and Pharaoh is warned in a dream that if he ever sleeps with Sarah he will become impotent. The Hebrew says that he will become dead sexually.

Pharaoh is obviously a bit worried and so he gives Sarah a whole lot of live stock and servants and goods and says please go.

Have you ever wondered why Abraham and Sarah were so rich? Here's why. Because Sarah lived with the right attitude, even though Abraham

was a real goofball on this occasion, God protected her and blessed her family.

Kids and young adults, how we would make home a wonderful place if we would have the same attitude as Jesus did to our imperfect parents. Spouses how we would bless our marriage partners if we would learn to serve and submit to each other and not care so much about who is right. Employees how we would bless and blow our bosses away if we served them faithfully and loyally without complaining or criticising. How blessed would they be if we worked hard to see them succeed. Church family how unified and blessed we would remain if we continue to submit to each other and to our leaders.

I believe that in all these situations our attitude of submission allows Christ to work in us to make us more like Him. I also believe that it brings blessing and the work of the Holy Spirit on those that we submit to and serve.

Jesus though he was better in every way than his step dad and mum obeyed them, respected them and honoured them. In this right demanding, independent, self orientated society Jesus calls us to have an attitude of heart that is like His.

I pray that the process of becoming more and more like Jesus would continue in you and I as we choose to submit to, honour and respect those around us. I pray that we would become less and less concerned with winning the argument or having the right answer and more and more concerned with being the right person.

I pray that we would decrease, that Christ might powerfully increase through us.