

Grace and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Luke 2 records Mary and Joseph finding 12 yr. old Jesus in the temple. He is astounding teachers of the law with his understanding and questions. And, in the verbal exchange with his concerned mother, Jesus reminds Mary: 'I **must** be in my father's house'.

Some translations say: 'I **must** be about my Father's business.' A few have: 'I **must** be about the affairs [things] of my father.' My [Pastor B's] translation is: '...I **must** be doing what the Father has sent me to do.' There are also other 'I **must**' statements in Luke's gospel:

- Early in his ministry Jesus said: "*I **must** preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.*" Luke 4.43
- Three times Jesus predicted his death and resurrection: "*The Son of Man **must** suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*" Luke 9.22
- Jesus said that his sacrifice for sin had to be accomplished in Jerusalem: "*I **must** go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.*" Luke 13.33
- At Easter dawn Angels spoke to the bewildered women at the tomb: "*Remember the saying that the Son of Man **must** be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.*" Luke 24.7
- That first Easter Jesus said these words to his disciples: "*These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you... The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and in His name repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.*" Luke 24.46-48

One more. In Luke 19, Jesus passed through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem to his death and resurrection. Zacchaeus, a tax collector and a short man, climbed a Sycamore tree to see Jesus. "*And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I **must** stay at your house today.*" Luke 19.5

Zacchaeus' life was changed. He said: "*Look, Lord, half of my possessions I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will repay it fourfold.*" [19.8] Jesus to Zacchaeus: "*Today salvation has come to this house... For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*" Luke 19.10-11

"I **must** be doing the work my father sent me to do" points to Old Testament covenant promises. In Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve's rebellion, God promised to crush Satan head. In Genesis 12 God promised Abraham that through him all nations of the earth would be blessed. In 2 Samuel 7 God promised to join His heavenly kingdom to David's earthly kingdom, and in this eternal kingdom, the throne and the crown of his glory, would be the cross on which Christ died to take away the sin of the world.

God is committed fulfill his covenant promises *for His name's sake*. The Old Testament has many 'for his name's sake passages. These Psalms passages give us an example:

- *He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness **for his name's sake**.* (23:3)

- *For you are my rock and my fortress; and **for your name's sake** you lead me and guide me.* (31:3)
- Help us, O God of our salvation, *for the **glory of your name***; deliver us, and atone for our sins, **for your name's sake!** (79:9)

The '**glory of your name**' is elaborated in Ephesians 1 by St. Paul, the second lesson appointed for today:

- *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him...**to the praise of his glory**...* [3-6]
- *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, **according to the riches of his glorious grace**,* [7]
- *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the **praise of his glory**.* [13-14]

"I **must** be doing the things my father sent me to do," Jesus said. "I **must** fulfill the covenant promises I made in the presence of Adam and Eve, through Abraham and David **for my name's sake**. I **must** deliver every spiritual blessing **to the praise of my glory**. I **must** bring redemption through my blood, the forgiveness of their sins **to the praise of my glory**."

How **must** I respond to what Jesus **must** do for me? Solomon provides a teachable moment. On the eve of his becoming king of Israel God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said: "Ask, and I will give it to you." Solomon's wisely said: "Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil."

Solomon could have asked for anything he wanted, but he knew that the things **he must do** to be king needed wisdom and guidance beyond his ability. So, he prayed, asking...

1. Give me an understanding heart – the ability to hear intelligently and attentively.
2. Give me the gift of discernment – insight to reject what is evil and choose the good.

As we say goodbye to 2020 and greet 2021 we know that we must do the work our father has sent us to do. We know that we can't do his work his way alone. So we pray...

1. Lord, give me an understanding heart, to hear your word...attentively and intelligently so that my life reflects your will and not my own.
2. Lord, give me a discerning heart to know the evil that lurks within me, to confess it, reject it and choose the good for your name's sake.
3. Lord, give me a discerning heart to know evil in its many disguises, to reject it and choose the good that reflects your glory.
4. Lord, increase Godly character in and through me in 2021...living the life I must live in the presence of all who know me, for your glorious grace.

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