STUDY GUIDE · 14 MAY 2026

Consecrated and Sent: Jesus the Child in Luke 2

Person of Christ

By presenting Jesus at the temple according to the Law, Mary and Joseph enact the declaration that this firstborn son belongs wholly to God — and Jesus' humble submission to that rite shows he is the one who will fulfil all righteousness in our place.

Luke is careful to note that the only reason Jesus is in the temple at all is the obedience of his parents to the word of God. The purification offering comes from Leviticus 12; the presentation of the firstborn comes from Exodus 13. Mary and Joseph were poor — they offered the two turtle doves permitted for those who could not afford a lamb — and yet God chose them precisely because they were devoted to his word. In Luke 2:39 Luke again makes the careful point that his parents did everything according to the law of the Lord. The humble setting matters: the consecration of Jesus is not staged in wealth or power but in faithful, ordinary obedience.

What is striking is that Jesus himself did not need any of these rites. As the sermon notes, he is God over the law who nevertheless became God submissive to the law as a human being, to fulfil all righteousness that we owe to God. Christians are not saved only by Jesus' death and resurrection; they are also saved by his life — by the perfect righteousness he lived in our place from his very first days. The consecration at the temple is the earliest visible sign of that

substitutionary obedience: the one who is holy to the Lord is set apart, not for his own sake, but for ours.

- What does it mean that 'every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord,' and how does that title apply uniquely to Jesus?
- Why is it significant that God's own Son submitted to a purification rite he did not personally need?
- In what ways does Jesus' consecration at birth point forward to the sacrifice that will one day consecrate us?

The Holy Spirit moves two faithful, waiting saints — Simeon and Anna — to identify the infant Jesus as God's salvation for all peoples, confirming his consecration with prophetic testimony and pointing to both the comfort and the conflict his mission will bring.

Simeon is described as righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. The sermon draws attention to the prophet Isaiah, whose words Simeon would have known deeply — 'Comfort, comfort my people, says your God… her iniquity is pardoned' (Isaiah 40:1–2). To wait for the consolation of Israel was not to wait for a programme or a political movement but for a person, the Messiah who would bring God's tender mercies after judgment. When Simeon holds the infant Jesus he can finally say, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation.' The sermon presses this point hard: Simeon was at peace with death for one reason — he trusted personally in the Saviour that God had sent. The question the sermon asks us is whether we share that same readiness.

Simeon's Nunc Dimittis reaches further than anyone expected. He declares Jesus to be 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel' — echoing Isaiah 49:6, where God

says it is 'too light a thing' just to save Israel, and that the Messiah will be a light to the nations so that God's salvation may reach the ends of the earth. But in the very same breath Simeon turns to Mary and warns her: 'a sword will pierce through your own soul also.' The shadow of the cross falls across the manger. This prophecy, the sermon argues, prepares Mary and every reader for true saving faith in Jesus, because his death was not a tragic accident of history but the fulfilment of God's preordained plan to bring salvation through the crucified Saviour.

Anna mirrors and deepens Simeon's testimony. A widow of 84 who had not departed from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day, she had spent her remaining years doing nothing other than seeking God. The sermon hears in her life the cadences of the Psalms — 'Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere' (Psalm 84); 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs for you' (Psalm 42). When she sees Simeon holding the child, she gives thanks to God and begins speaking of Jesus to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Her decades of faithful waiting had formed in her the eyes to recognise God's work the moment it appeared. Together, Simeon and Anna model the posture the guide will return to in its conclusion: a lifetime of expectant worship that is ready, when the moment comes, to see and to speak.

- What had Simeon been waiting for, and what does his lifelong posture of expectation teach us about how we are to relate to Jesus?
- Simeon describes Jesus as 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel' — what does the universal scope of that claim tell us about the child's mission?
- Why does Simeon's blessing immediately include a warning about conflict and a sword — how does opposition belong to the identity of the one who has been sent?

- How does Anna's decades of temple worship shape the way she responds when she finally sees Jesus — what does her example say about readiness to recognise God's work?

Luke brackets the temple episode with two nearly identical statements about Jesus growing in wisdom, stature, and favour, insisting that the consecrated Son entered fully into human development — learning, being taught Scripture by his parents, and maturing in every dimension of a real human life.

Luke frames the temple episode with two almost identical statements: 'the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favour of God was upon him' (Luke 2:40) and 'Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man' (Luke 2:52). This deliberate sandwich, the sermon argues, is Luke's way of ensuring we do not miss what is hardest to believe about Jesus — that he was truly and fully human. The sermon is candid that even Christians can be tempted to think of Jesus as a kind of 'divine puppet,' a human fleshly shell animated by God from the inside. Luke will not let us rest there. Jesus had a fully human body, a fully human soul, a fully human mind, and a fully human will. He got blisters working with his father in the family construction business; those blisters turned to calluses; his boyish muscles grew strong. God the Son, who eternally does not change, became a boy who went through puberty, just as we do.

According to his human nature, Jesus also had to learn. The sermon makes the striking observation that Jesus learned the words of God — his own revealed word — from Mary and Joseph. They taught him Scripture day in and day out, brought him to synagogue every Saturday, and brought him to Jerusalem for the Passover once a year. Unlike every other child, there was nothing Jesus learned that he did not obey, and no word of God that fell on the soil of his heart that did not produce good fruit. His sinless human love for God's word is precisely what drives him to seize the opportunity at twelve years old to sit among the teachers in the temple, listening and

asking questions until those around him are amazed.

The sermon gives three reasons why Jesus' full humanity is good news. First, because he lived a fully human life — suffering every temptation at every stage — he is a merciful and faithful high priest who understands us and can help us (Hebrews 2:16–18). Second, because he became fully human, he was able to take our corrupted humanity and heal it. The sermon appeals to Athanasius's portrait illustration: when a painting is marred and broken, the loving artist does not discard the canvas but invites the subject to sit again so the image can be redrawn. Jesus became a perfect human so that our broken selves could be redrawn in his image — his perfect human mind to heal our twisted minds, his perfect human soul to restore our disordered desires, his physical flesh to heal our sickness and death in the resurrection. Third, Jesus in his perfect humanity is the one model worth following. No influencer, no expert, no to-do list can transform a human life the way that seeing and delighting in Jesus can.

- What does it mean that Jesus 'increased in wisdom' — how can the eternal Son of God genuinely learn and grow?
- How does the image of Jesus learning Scripture from Mary and Joseph, and attending synagogue and Passover year by year, reshape your picture of his childhood?
- Why does it matter for our salvation that the consecrated child was not a 'divine puppet' but a genuinely human person who grew up in the ordinary way?
- In what three ways does Jesus' full humanity become good news for us, according to Hebrews 2:16–18 and the sermon?

When the twelve-year-old Jesus stays behind in the temple and answers Mary with 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?', he reveals a growing human consciousness of his divine identity and a

settled sense of mission — the consecrated child now speaks as one actively oriented toward the purpose for which he was sent.

The temple episode is set against the Passover, the central festival of Jewish religion, celebrating the lamb whose blood was painted on the doorposts so that the destroying angel would pass over and Israel would be liberated into fellowship with God. For a twelve-year-old boy, the sermon imagines, it must have been paradise — a massive, joyful gathering of hundreds of thousands. When Mary and Joseph cannot find Jesus on the return journey and come back to Jerusalem in great distress, they find him sitting among the teachers, listening and asking questions. Mary's words carry a hint of rebuke: 'Your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.' But Jesus corrects her gently and directly: 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'

The sermon calls these words 'shocking,' and explains why. In the Old Testament, God sometimes calls the nation of Israel his son, but never does any individual human being — not David, not Solomon, not any king, prophet, or priest — refer to God in the first person as 'my Father.' Jesus' words are without precedent. The sermon suggests that what we are witnessing is Jesus' growing human consciousness of who he truly is: as his human mind grew in understanding, he became more and more aware that his true father was not Joseph but God most high. The sermon invites us to imagine the three days before his parents find him not merely as a learning exercise but as a conversation with a different father — the heavenly Father revealing to the human mind of Jesus the eternal plan: that the sacrificial lamb of the Passover was not any of the lambs in the street, but Jesus himself; that the curtain separating God from humanity was a curtain Jesus came to tear down by his own flesh on the cross.

Yet the episode ends with Jesus going home to Nazareth and being submissive to his parents. The sermon marvels at this: Jesus, who actually did know everything his parents were going to say before they said it, willingly submitted to be taught and instructed by imperfect human parents. This is not reluctant compliance; it is the same willing human obedience to the divine plan that

will ultimately carry him to the cross. The consecrated child is not passive — he knows where he must be and why — but his sense of mission is expressed through the very human rhythms of learning, submitting, and growing.

- Why are Jesus' words in verse 49 described in the sermon as 'shocking' — what is unprecedented about a human being calling God 'my Father' in the Old Testament?
- The sermon imagines Jesus in the temple learning from God the Father about the plan of salvation — how does the Passover setting deepen the meaning of Jesus being 'at home' there?
- How does Jesus' correction of Mary — 'your father and I' versus 'my Father's house' — reflect both his genuine humanity and his divine identity at the same time?
- What does it look like for a child to be 'about his Father's business' — how does Jesus' single-minded love for God's word and God's house model a life shaped by being sent?

The consecration and the sending are not two separate facts about Jesus but one unified movement of God's love toward sinners: the child set apart for God is simultaneously the child given for the world, so that through his perfect human life, his cross, and his resurrection, broken humanity can be healed and adopted into the family of God.

The sermon on Luke 2:40–52 closes with the passage's own conclusion: Jesus went home, was submissive to his parents, and 'increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.' Behind that quiet ending stands the entire purpose of the Incarnation. The sermon quotes Galatians 4:4–6 as the hinge: 'But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,

crying, Abba, Father.' The two childhood scenes in Luke 2 illustrate both halves of that verse: Jesus 'born of woman' is seen in the baby presented at the temple, submitted to the law, set apart as holy; Jesus growing in wisdom and returning to his Father's house is seen in the twelve-year-old who already knows the intimate name — my Father — that the gospel promises to share with every believer.

Simeon's sword prophecy, the Passover lamb imagery of the temple episode, and the Athanasian portrait illustration all converge on the same point: God did not become human merely to demonstrate what human life looks like. He became human to take our corrupted humanity — broken mind, disordered soul, mortal flesh — and carry it through death and resurrection so that it could be remade. As the sermon puts it, the artist who loves his painting does not throw the marred canvas away; he invites the subject to sit again so the broken image can be redrawn in the image of the perfect one. The consecration of the child at the temple and the calling of the child in the temple are two moments in that single, sweeping act of redemption.

The sermon ends not with a list of tasks but with an invitation to behold — because it is by beholding the glory of the Lord in Jesus that we are transformed from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). The church at Kitsilano is described as a neighbourhood church committed to making missional disciples for the sake of the neighbourhood, which is to say that the life of the consecrated-and-sent Son is now the shape of his people's lives. Anna could not stop talking about Jesus to everyone waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. That is the vocation the study guide presses toward: a community formed by lifelong waiting, recognising, and worshipping the one who was set apart for us and sent to us.

- How does the thread running from Simeon's 'sword' prophecy through the Passover lamb imagery show that the child's consecration was always pointing toward the cross?

- What does Athanasius's portrait illustration add to our understanding of why it mattered that the sent Son became fully human?
- Galatians 4:4–6 says God sent his Son 'born of woman, born under the law' so that we might receive adoption — how do the two childhood scenes in Luke 2 illustrate each half of that verse?
- In what sense are we, as the church, called to continue the mission of the consecrated and sent Son in our own neighbourhood?

Conclusion

Jesus' childhood in Luke 2 is not a prelude to his ministry — it is his ministry beginning. The baby presented at the temple in humble obedience to the law and the twelve-year-old who cannot be anywhere other than his Father's house are one and the same person: fully human, fully God, and fully given over to saving us. Simeon and Anna point us to the right posture — a lifetime of waiting, recognising, and worshipping the one who was set apart for us and sent to us. Like Mary, we may not always understand what we see, but we are invited to treasure these things in our hearts and keep pondering them. The guide closes by asking each participant: in what ways is my life oriented around the one who was consecrated and sent for me? To see Jesus as he truly is — not an imagined or comfortable version, but the one who brings comfort, conflict, and redemption — is, as the sermon insists, the most practical and transformative thing we can do. It is by beholding his glory that we are changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another, until the day when the redemption Anna announced is finally, fully complete.

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