The ideal home

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[0:00] Now let's turn to a verse in the second chapter of Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 2 and verse 40.

Luke chapter 2 verse 40, where we read of the Lord Jesus as a child, and the child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.
What sort of home is an ideal home? That's quite a good question to consider on the morning of an infant baptism.
What kind of home is an ideal home for a child to grow up in? What kind of ideal environment would we be looking for that would be the very best for a child?
Would it be, as seems to be thought today, the home that has everything that money can buy?
People have a natural love for their children. They want to give them the very best.
[1:23] And so it is thought that if you have a nice home, all home comfort, and if you're able to give your children all the toys that they want, and the clothes that they need, and all these things, then you're really providing them with a good home environment, and giving them all the stimulation that they need.

And of course we know that there's tremendous pressure on young couples nowadays to have everything that money can buy for their homes and for their families.
And the whole thing is materially oriented. The focus is upon, as the expression goes, the things that money can buy.
But as we know, and as the song says, money can't buy me love. And really deep down we know that there are more important things than the things that money can buy.
But unfortunately, all too often, people realise it too late. Well, what about the only home that ever produced a perfect child?
[2:49] Don't know if you've ever thought about it in that way. I know I didn't, until I thought about this sermon this morning. The only home that ever produced a perfect child was the home of Joseph and Mary.

Now I know, before we go any further, and before the theological experts among you are raising questions, I know that the perfection of the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ did not depend upon his home environment.
did not depend primarily on his home environment, we might say. Because we know that the perfection of the human nature of Jesus Christ was caused by the Holy Spirit overseeing the incarnation of the eternal Son of God as he took a human nature.
But nonetheless, we know too from God's own word that the Lord Jesus learned obedience.
God did not choose to put his Son here into the world fully grown. He chose in accordance with all his promises and in accordance with an absolute necessity for our salvation to cause the Lord Jesus to have a human nature like ours.
[4:18] And ours starts from conception and through the teenage years into adulthood.

And that is the human nature that the Lord Jesus had. And we are told that he learned obedience.
And we are told here twice, in Luke chapter 2, that Jesus grew and developed in various ways.
The child grew and became strong, we read in verse 40. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. And then in verse 52, And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.
There was a process of development taking place in that home environment. So God chose that particular home environment for the Lord Jesus to learn obedience and to grow in grace and to grow in favor with God and men.
Now, as we look at this home, we're going to ask really two questions or look at two aspects of it.

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[5:39] We're going to look at the things that are disadvantages, either apparent or real. the things that appear not to be ideal about this home.

And then we're going to look at the good points about this home. First, we're going to look at what no doubt today would be viewed very much as disadvantages, a disadvantaged home in some ways.
First, we discover that this home was not well off. In fact, this home was probably quite poor.
I don't think it would be right to say that they were abject poverty. But nonetheless, there are hints given to us that they were not well off, they were poor. For instance, Mary's song, known as the Magnificat, in chapter 1 of Luke's Gospel, gives us a hint to that.
In verse 48 of chapter 1, she says that God has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
Now, that doesn't mean that she was a humble person by nature.
[7:00] No doubt she was. But it's referring to her lowly position and condition. And we see later on in this same song, in verses 52 and 53, a reference again to the same kind of thing.

He, that is God, has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty.
The whole background to that is saying, I, Mary, I'm poor. I'm not wealthy, I haven't got status, I haven't got any of those things.
Yet God, in his grace, has granted me this tremendous privilege of being the mother of the saviour of the world. So, there are these very clear hints in Mary's own words.
But then again, in chapter 2, we have another clear hint that this background, this home, was a poor one. In chapter 2, and verse 24, when we read that Joseph and Mary went up to the temple in obedience to the law of the Old Testament to make purification after Mary had had the child, we read that they offered a sacrifice.
[8:28] Now, you may say, well, there's nothing unusual about that. Everybody offered a sacrifice. They were commanded to do that in the law. But, what was interesting is the sacrifice which they actually made. we read, they offered a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of doves or two young pigeons.

And you'll notice if you've got the NIV Pew Bible or one of your own, you'll notice that there's a reference given there. That is, Leviticus chapter 12, verse 8.
And if you look that up, you'll find something very interesting. That passage says that the normal sacrifice in those circumstances is a lamb and then a dove and a pigeon.
But then is given an alternative. And the alternative is that a couple could come and they could bring a pair of doves instead of the lamb and the dove.
Now, what's that saying? It's saying this. That allowance was made for those who were poor, for those who couldn't afford a lamb.
[9:44] They could bring two pigeons instead of the lamb and the pigeon because the lamb was something of quite considerable value in the ancient world. It's still the same today.

When I was up north, the sheep sales were on and lambs were selling for around 30 pounds. Now, if you wanted to buy, I suppose, a lamb a little bit older in the butchers, it would be a good deal more than that.
But if you were going to buy a chicken, say, for instance, well, only something like a fiver. So you see, there's a tremendous discrepancy still today.
Well, there was an even greater discrepancy in the ancient world. And so, we have here, again, a clear hint that Joseph and Mary were not well off.
They were poor. They were amongst those who couldn't afford to pay for the lamb. So, we have these two clear hints so far from Mary's song and also from the sacrifice that the background was poor.
[10:52] Now, the other thing that is usually associated with this is the fact that Joseph, as we know, was a carpenter. We're told that in Matthew chapter 13.

But, of course, that of itself would not indicate that somebody was poor. Nor would it be right to say that somebody who was a carpenter would be impoverished.
We would have to say, here is someone at least who had work. But the point is that he was someone who worked at a trade. He worked with his hand. He wasn't amongst those more privileged and with status in that society, people like the teachers of the law and that kind of thing.

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Or amongst the rich and the wealthy who didn't need to work at all. he was, what we might say, an ordinary working person. So, we read too that Jesus, as he grew up, he followed his father's train. And he was referred to as the carpenter in Mark chapter 6. So, Jesus didn't have all the privileges that we today normally take for granted.
[12:07] Especially amongst the middle classes in the western world. There was no university for Jesus. Or college either. Jesus, as he grew up, would have had the synagogue school, the same as all the other Jewish boys, but then he would work with his hands for a living the same as the rest of them.

So, this is the background that Jesus had. Impoverished, in some way. Impoverished materially. And a home where people had to work hard with their hands for the living. Something that often today is looked down upon. But that was Jesus' background.
That was the kind of home in which he grew up. Then secondly, and really, we could have taken this first, but we wanted to set the background first.
Secondly, we see that Jesus, and it has to be said this way, shocking thought may sound, Jesus was conceived out of wedlock.
[13:18] Joseph was engaged to Mary, and Joseph, we're told, discovered that Mary was pregnant.

And Joseph, we're told, had it in mind to divorce her quietly. Not to make a fuss about it, but to divorce her quietly. The idea of divorce there is not that she was already married to him, but she was espoused to him, or betrothed to him, which was a very strong thing in the ancient world, stronger than our modern idea of engagement, but that this would be broken because she was pregnant before they had got married.
Because, obviously, Joseph took the normal understanding and interpretation of that, that she had become pregnant in the normal way.
So, you see, Jesus' background, Jesus' home background, was not, it would appear, the ideal one, as we so often might think of it.
Now, we know that there was a great explanation for that, and that Mary, as is said quite specifically in both Matthew and Luke, was pregnant, was with child because of the Holy Spirit who had brought into being the human nature of the Lord Jesus, the Savior of the world, in the womb of the Virgin Mary.
[14:57] But, nonetheless, it was difficult enough for Joseph to understand that, and if anybody else got wind of that, then, surely, there would also have been difficulty there.

these were things that were difficult to accept, then, as now. And so, Jesus' background, again, was not so easy or so ideal as perhaps sometimes we might think.
We know that Joseph's attitude was that he should divorce Mary quietly. He didn't want to make a fuss about it, but he was a righteous man, we're told.
He wanted to do what was right, and so he wanted to do that. Was that something that maybe caused difficulty in their relationship later on?
We're not told. But certainly, no doubt, Mary at that point must have felt that she was going to be deserted, left to bring up a child on her own. So, you see, there were tensions and there were difficulties there.
[16:07] So, Jesus' background was not what we might call ideal in some way, what we might think ideal. And then, of course, another well-known aspect, Jesus was a refugee before he was two years old.

We're told that Herod, finding out that he had been tricked by the wise men, they hadn't come back and told him where the child was and he wanted to get rid of this child, he killed all the children in the area of Bethlehem, two years old and under, according to the time that he had heard from the wise men.
So, before Jesus was two years old, maybe a good deal less than that, Jesus was on the run with his parents down to the land of Egypt. And then, later, when Joseph heard that Herod was dead, back they came to Judea, but finding that Herod son was now ruling there, they were afraid to stay there, so they went to Nazareth in the north in Galilee.
So, again, Jesus' background, in that sense, Jesus' home, not very ideal in the early months of life. A little child, being carried about, hundreds of miles, down to Egypt, back up again.

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Not exactly the ideal thing. We're usually told not to move house when a woman's expecting a child or soon after a child has been born.
[17:41] But here were people who were on the move all the time and in fear for their lives. Again, surely not the ideal setup. And then Jesus was brought up in Nazareth.

Now you might think, well, what's so bad about that? Well, Nathaniel tells us what's so bad about that. He says, Nazareth, when he heard that Jesus came from there, Nazareth, can anything good come out of Nazareth?
Now we don't know all the background to that, but obviously a lot of Jewish people looked down on Nazareth. Whether it was that they thought it was sort of a northern rough backwater or something, we're not told.
it was more likely that they thought of it as a very worldly place, because Nazareth was in Galilee, which was an area in which the Jews lived much more in contact with the Gentiles.
And it was on an area where trade routes were crossing, and all sorts of people would be coming and going. So maybe it was in that sense they looked down on it. But for whatever reason, people looked down on it.
[18:54] It was a disadvantage to say when you went and looking for a job, to say, oh, I'm from Nazareth. That's the kind of thing. It's like saying in some areas of Edinburgh or Glasgow, you're from a certain housing scheme when you go looking for a job.

That's the kind of thing that Jesus was up against. So again, there was something disadvantaged about his background. But then, thinking more about his relationship with his parents, we discovered that his parents found it difficult to understand him.
Now, that shows that the Lord Jesus really fully entered into the experience of family life. An ideal family in this situation was not one where there was not the normal misunderstandings and all the rest of it.
Jesus entered fully into that, but for a special reason. they couldn't understand what he was about because he was about something that they didn't really expect. We're very familiar with the story of how they went up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, and they lost Jesus.
They didn't know where he was, and there he was. Eventually, they discovered him in the temple, debating and arguing and discussing with the religious leaders, the theologians of the day. And we read in verse 48, when his parents saw him, they were astonished.
[20:23] His mother said to him, son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. Doesn't that sound very familiar? Well, here again, there was something in his background that wasn't just totally ideal.

Mary and Joseph, they didn't really understand their son. Now, no doubt many of us as parents feel that, and no doubt many of us as children feel that too, that our parents don't understand.
Well, Jesus knew that kind of experience, and Mary and Joseph knew that kind of experience. They didn't understand what he was about at all.
And then, the last thing I want to mention in connection with this disadvantaged side of Jesus' background, something that again, perhaps we don't think of very often.
Jesus came from a big family. Jesus was the oldest brother of a large family. We don't know exactly how large, but we know that he had four brothers because they're named, as well as sisters.
[21:36] And we're told that in Mark chapter 6, verse 3. His four brothers are named, and then he had sisters as well, maybe he had four sisters, we don't know how many.

But he came from what today would be considered a large family. And again, that's something that's often thought of today as something that's a big disadvantage, that someone doesn't get the love and the attention that they really need and deserve if they belong to a big family.
family. Well, when you compare some small families to some big families, you can ask questions about that general rule of thumb. It doesn't necessarily follow.
There are dangers, I suppose, in both. But the point is that today, it's considered a great disadvantage to be a part of a large family.
Well, Jesus was part of a large family. And it would appear, it's not spelled out in detail, but it would appear that very soon he had to assume responsibility for the family until his other brothers were old enough.
[22:49] We don't know, did Joseph die? But he certainly disappears from the story. And Jesus is then called the carpenter. So Jesus had all these problems and difficulties of his background.

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So as we think today about what the ideal family situation is, the ideal home is, we've got to recognize that there are all these problems and many others in the world.
Our families may be affected by some of these problems or by others. we know that in this world there is no perfect family environment.
There are things like poverty, there are things like finding it difficult to make ends meet. There are difficulties in relationships within the family.
All these things are there. And we're told about these things and given hints about them in the Gospels concerning Jesus back then. To assure us that these are not the things that ultimately matter.
[24:07] You see, today this is the problem. People in looking for the ideal home, they're focusing upon things like being well enough off to have this, that, than the next thing.

On making sure that everything is perfect in their relationships, the size of their family and all the rest. But it turns out that that does not make the ideal family.
That does not bring up the ideal and perfect child. Because there is something far, far more about the ideal home than that. And so I want to look with you at what were the strong points.
of this family background in which the Lord Jesus was brought up. We're told something about Joseph and Mary as individuals, first of all.
Joseph, we're told, as we noticed already, was a righteous man. Now, we know that there is perhaps a certain hint in the use of the word there in that context that's saying, well, he was like a stickler to do what was right in any situation.
[25:22] That kind of attitude to righteousness. But I think it's wrong to say that that exhausts the meaning of that expression. Joseph was a righteous man, yes, in that sense that he was a stickler to do what was right, and maybe in that situation he was lacking in love or whatever, but primarily the expression somebody is a righteous man means that they are right with God.

That's the basic meaning. Yes, no doubt Joseph was imperfect, the same as every other one of us is imperfect. But there was one thing about Joseph, he was right with God.
Now, we may look at our fathers or our husbands and we may say, well, they're not perfect. And we may have this criticism or that criticism of them.
But if you have got a husband who's a righteous man, if you have got a father who's a righteous man, if you have got someone who is right with God, who trusts in God, then that is the thing that ultimately really matters.
The other things can be worked out. the other things perhaps can be put up with in this fallen world in which we live. But the one great privilege, the one that many other wives and children would give anything for, is that your father, your husband, is a Christian.
[27:01] Christian. And then we read also of Mary, really more in what she says than what is said about her, that she was of one mind with Joseph in this.

We read in verse 38 of chapter 1, Mary, I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered, may it be to me as you have said. Mary didn't understand it all.
Who could? She didn't understand all of what was going to happen to her. She had questions, she had asked the angel some of them, no doubt she had many more questions that she couldn't think of at the time.
Doubts and fears and worries about all that was going to happen. But there was one thing, you see, that she was sure about, and that was that she would obey God.
She couldn't see how it was all going to work out, but she knew the Lord in whom she trusted, and she speaks of him in her great song, my soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
[28:19] You see, she knew the Lord in that personal way, and so she was prepared to obey, to yield herself to his will.

And isn't that the thing that's tremendously important? More important than silver or gold, more important than all the affluence, more important than beauty or good looks or all these things, that there should be someone who is concerned to do God's will.
And if you've got a mother or you've got a wife like that, then that's what really is important, that's what really matters, that's what's really going to give the ideal environment for someone to grow up in, because that's the ideal environment that God chose for his own son growing up in this world.

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Joseph and Mary, with all their imperfections, but with that commitment to the Lord, that trust in God, that looking to him to work things out, which nothing else can replace.
And so we see that this home which they built together was built upon an understanding of God's word. We see this supremely in Mary's song.
[29:40] the understanding she had of God's will and of God's word. There was an understanding of salvation in verse 47. My spirit rejoices in God, my savior.

She recognized that she needed a savior. She was a sinner and she needed God to do something to save her. And that's the great thing which we as parents, which we in trying to create an ideal Christian home, that's one of the great things we're going to pass on to our children.
That they need the savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into this world to die for sinners. She had a great understanding of covenant love. In verse 50 we read, his mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation.
And in verse 54 and 55, he has helped his servant Israel remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our father.
You see, Mary knew that it was not just something individual between her and God. Yes, it was that. But it had this tremendous history.
[31:00] It had this tremendous emphasis upon from generation to generation. God had made promises to Abraham. They were being fulfilled in a special way in her very lifetime and in her very experience.

But you see, there's more to it than that. That God keeps his promises. And God has promised not only to bless those who believe in him, but their families also.
And that's the great promise which we claim today. as we bring a child for baptism. Not on that child's own understanding or own faith, because the child is too young, but on the understanding and faith of their parents and claiming this promise that God will bless not only the parents, but also the child.
And of course, Mary also had a great understanding of God's justice and God's grace. in verses 52 and 53. He has brought down the rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty. Again, you see, we get caught up today so much with those who are rich and famous or of status in one way or another, and we fail to have this proper biblical emphasis that says all of their wealth, all of their fame will come to nothing if they don't have the Lord Jesus Christ.
[32:36] These people that we look up to and we adore today, they have nothing if they don't have the Lord Jesus, if they don't know the grace of God because they only face the judgment of God.

So we need to have this understanding that Mary had, this appreciation of how privileged she was, of how she received the unmerited grace of God, poor and humble, though she was.
These are the kind of things in which our homes, if they're to be ideal homes, are to be built. These are the kind of things in which homes were built in the past, in this country, but they're the kind of things now that are totally forgotten.
we as Christians have to be 100% committed to these things as being the ideal and not the thing that the world around us clings to.
And of course, finally, this was a home that actually practiced religion. It wasn't just a home where lip service was given to these things I've been talking about.
[33:56] We read that on the eighth day, Jesus was circumcised. When the time came for Mary's purification, they went up to the temple. Then we read that every year they went up to the temple for the Passover.

That was the home background of the Lord Jesus. Joseph and Mary didn't say, oh well, he'll make up his own mind when he's old enough to understand these things, but let's let him run riots now. They didn't do that. Many people today do that. Many people who think that they are quite serious about these things say exactly that.
The home that God chose for his son to grow up in was one where they practiced religion. God is true. Then it is true for the child just as much for the parent.
And a child has got to be led. A child has got to be taught to know the truth. Because God's word assures us that our nature is not inclined to the good.
[35:11] Now here is something that applies totally different from the situation we've been looking at. That is the home life of the Lord Jesus. Jesus' nature was inclined to good. Because his nature

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was perfect.

But the nature of our children is inclined to evil even as our own is. Apart from the grace of God. And so we need if Jesus was given that privilege of that home background to be led in obedience to the truth how much more do our children need?
that leading that showing to them what the Bible teaches that showing to them what it means to practice religion to pray to God and to read the Bible and to come together with God's people to worship him that's what I mean by the practice of religion in that sense.
There's more to the practice of religion than that because it is an everyday affair in all that we do. But surely if we don't begin at these points then everything else falls.
So we today are challenged as we consider the question what is an ideal home for a child to be growing up in? And as we look at the ideal home that God chose for his son wasn't ideal in many ways that would appear in the modern world but it was ideal in the things that really matter.
[36:43] yes they may have been poor yes they may have had various problems but there was a commitment there to love God and to serve him which nothing else could replace and that was the thing that God chose in that family for the upbringing for the growing in grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and if that's what God chose for the one who above all did not need any help we might think how much more do our families and do our children need that kind of ideal background we read twice in this chapter Luke chapter 2 we read twice of Jesus growing the child grew in verse 40 and became strong he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him and then in verse 52 and Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with

God and men that's our desire for our children and it's our desire that they would have the most ideal of backgrounds in this knowledge of God and of his way of which we've been reading in relation to that home of Joseph and Mary let us pray our gracious and loving heavenly father we recognize our own failures in all these ways we've been considering deliver us from setting ourselves up and thinking that we have achieved those things Lord show to us how very far short we come of your great standards for us but gracious Lord we pray that you would not cause us to despair and to give up but to look to you and to your grace and strength even as
Joseph and Mary did so long ago you have given to us as parents and as a congregation great responsibilities in the bringing up and Christian education of young people we pray that you would help us and aid us in these things for we are weak and foolish of ourselves gracious Lord we ask that you would remember this day in which we live with the tremendous confusion that there is the tremendous lack of guidance that there is to children and to young people oh Lord we pray that you would have mercy upon us mercy upon the churches for in the churches too we are confused and a confused message is going out to the world as to what the word of God actually is oh gracious Lord look upon us in mercy change these situations cause your own word to be proclaimed clearly and truly and unanimously we pray that you would have mercy upon our nation upon its children and young people and cause many of them to be led to the Lord Jesus to discover in him the true purpose for living we ask these things in Jesus name Amen now we sing to God's praise in Psalm 107 verses 40 to 43 he upon princes pours contempt and causeth them to stray and wander in a wilderness wherein there is no way yet setteth he the poor on high from all his miseries and he much like unto a flock doth make them families that's
Psalm 107 from verse 40 to the end to God's praise He upon princes pours contempt and causeth them to stare and wander in the wilderness wherein there is no way yet there death he he the poor on high from all his misery and he
[42:22] I lose may thanks O to people should come and come onunda help me 151 des m Our righteous shall rejoice When they the same shall see And as a shamed stone her mouth Shall all iniquity Whose soul is wise and will be saved

Observe and the heavenly heart In nature understand the law And kindness of the Lord Well, I'd just like to add a few words Help me

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