



And so we jump from the manger to the Temple when Jesus is twelve years old. We'll be going back to his childhood next week, but in the meantime, we are faced with a Jesus who is very human – learning, debating, growing, looking rather like Samuel did when he was a boy. One of the toughest choices we will make in our faith is to really take the humanity of Jesus seriously. This is the challenge of this week in the Lectionary.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

TEXT OF READINGS

First Bible Reading 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

But Samuel was ministering before the LORD--a boy wearing a linen ephod. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD." Then they would go home. And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the LORD and with men.

Second Reading Colossians Chapter 3:12-17

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel Reading Luke Chapter 2:41-52

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find

him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.

Click here to view the readings:

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=1%20Samuel%202026%20Psalm%20148%20Colossians%203%2012-17%20Luke%202041-52

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty God,
who hast given us thy only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him,
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin;
Grant that we being regenerate,
and made thy children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit;
through the same our Lord Jesus Christ,
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit,
ever one God, world without end.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
who wonderfully created us in your own image
and yet more wonderfully restored us
through your Son Jesus Christ:
Grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,
so we may share the life of his divinity;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

As we join the whole creation and celebrate with joy the Word made flesh, let us offer prayers to God who dwells among us to the end of time.

Deacon or other leader

By the wedding of the human and divine natures in Christ Jesus.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and

for all the holy people of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all believers who put their trust in the incarnate Son of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for peace and justice.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the conversion of the whole human race to our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For travellers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, for those in prison, and for the dying and the dead.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Remembering *N*, and all the saints, let us

offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Source of grace and truth, accept the prayers we offer on this joyful feast. May we come to see the true light who shines throughout the world and who is God for all eternity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Heavenly Father,
you have refreshed us with this heavenly sacrament.
As your Son came to live among us,
grant us grace to live our lives,
united in love and obedience,
as those who long to live with him in heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

O Holy One,
heavenly angels spoke to earthly shepherds
and eternity entered time in the child of Bethlehem.
Through the telling of the Christmas story,
let our temporal lives be caught up in the eternal
in that same child,
that we might join shepherds and all the heavenly host
in praising the coming of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

God of glory,
your splendour shines from a manger in Bethlehem,
where the Light of the world is humbly born
into the darkness of human night.
Open our eyes to Christ's presence in the shadows of our world,
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so that we, like him, may become beacons of your justice,
and defenders of all for whom there is no room. Amen.

Light of life, you came in flesh,
born into human pain and joy,
and gave us power to be your children.
Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us,
so that all of creation may sing new songs of gladness
and walk in the way of peace. Amen.

We bless you, Abba, Father,
for you have visited your people
in one like us in all things but sin,
and in human fragility you have revealed
the face of divinity.
Gather into your arms
all the peoples of the world,
so that in your embrace
we may find blessing, peace,
and the fullness of our inheritance
as your daughters and sons. Amen.

With the angels of heaven we proclaim your glory, O God.
As the radiance of your presence lights up the heavens,
we pray for enlightenment
for your church on behalf of the whole world.
Grant that, through our prayers,
our lives may radiate the presence of Christ
to all who dwell on earth,
for he is our Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

God of all ages,
in the birth of Christ
your boundless love for your people
shattered the power of darkness.
Be born in us with that same love and light,
that our song may blend with all the choirs of heaven and earth
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26:

- V. 26, “Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature...” Compare this to the description of John the Baptist in Luke 1:80 – “The child grew and became strong in spirit...” and of Jesus in Luke 2:52 – “Jesus increased in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favour.” These statements seem to indicate a child marked by God, for some special/divine purpose.
- V. 18-20 – Samuel’s mother, Hannah, played such an important role in her son’s life. Remember that it was her prayers during a time of barrenness that brought to her the gift of Samuel, and she promised to give Samuel as a servant to God if she was able to bear a son. Her faithfulness continues to God indirectly through service to her son. In other words, how we care for others links to how we care about God, and is ‘credited’ to us as service to God.

Psalm 148:

- Praise, praise, praise! That's the theme of this psalm. This psalm has beautiful imagery about creation – it is not just that humans praise God or even praise God for the gift of creation. It is *creation itself* that praises God for its own existence. “Praise [God], sun and moon; praise him all you shining stars!”
- This image sort of reminds me of “The Lion King” when all the animals come to see the new baby Simba be ‘baptized’ – all creation is joining in. What a picture!
- Creation is commanded by the psalmist to give praise because of its *existence*. Do we require more of God to give God praise? Do we only feel like praising when things are going our way or when we've received some desired request? Or do we praise because we *are*, because we have *being*?
- V. 11-12 say that Kings and the regular people, rulers, young men and women, old men and women, *all* should praise together. Is that a good picture of worship today? How do we worship together from different walks of life? Who is missing from this full picture in our own congregations?

Colossians 3:12-17:

- This is a popular favorite scripture passage, not only from Colossians, but from the whole Bible. It's a picture of a community's way of living in Christ, and it's an ideal we probably all seek.
- “God's chosen ones” – from the Greek “eklektoi”, meaning literally ‘say out’ but translated as ‘chosen out’ or ‘selected.’ (Humorously, the verb form can mean “to pull out one's gray hairs”!)
- Images of *clothing ourselves*, with compassion, kindness, humility, etc. Compare this to imagery of clothing ourselves with the armor of Christ that we find in Ephesians 6. Also, this metaphor loses some of its punch if we think about today's clothing styles. But imagine something from biblical times, long and flowing robes, draped over the body in folds, and you get a different idea of how this “clothing ourselves” can function.
- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” The word *dwell* comes from the Greek “enoikeito”, which does simply mean “live in” or “dwell” as translated, but it is a word used for people living in a house, not Christ's word. Paul is suggesting that Christ's word come to live with you, to be as much a part of your life and your home as your children or spouses or parents are.

Luke 2:41-52:

- This is the only canonical story we have of Jesus from the birth narratives in Luke and Matthew until Jesus begins his ministry around age 30. Why is it included? What else happened to Jesus in his childhood, his teenage years, his twenties? These are questions people wonder and dream about.
- I think of the series “Smallville” on the WB – the account of Clark Kent/Superman's high school years, previously unknown to us. This is what we wish we had of Jesus – a way to learn about all the things that went into shaping who he became as an adult.
- “Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey.” It's hard to imagine parents traveling a day without knowing for sure where their 12 year old was. This let's us know we have a disconnect between today and Jesus' day in terms of customs about travel, child care, community relationships, etc.
- Probably this story is included mostly to illustrate Jesus' already divine nature, the fact that he was already set apart even at a young age.

- “His mother treasured all these things in her heart.” Imagine being the parent of one like Jesus, and trying to let go of the usual ways that you would act toward a child in order to let something greater take place. Today’s lectionary features the acts of two mothers: Hannah and Mary. We also have to let go of things in our lives in order to let God’s greater purpose be at work in our lives.

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The Lectionary takes us on a strange journey this year. Having just celebrated the birth of Christ, we now fast forward to the one story in the Scriptures from Jesus’ childhood – when his parents forgot him in the Temple. Then, with next week being Epiphany, we go back in time again, to the visit of the magi. The difference is that, while Christmas seeks to explore the event of the incarnation, Epiphany begins to tease out the meaning of the incarnation. The season that follows Epiphany leads us still deeper into an understanding of Jesus through the eyes of those who encountered him, while also showing the different ways that God’s glory was manifest through Christ. That means that we are still seeking to gain some grasp of the incarnation itself in this Sunday after Christmas. The clue in the Lectionary this week is in the reading from 1 Samuel which forms a kind of parallel with the Gospel. Both Samuel and Jesus were at home in the temple from a very young age. Both had parents who valued and visited the Temple. Both became teachers and leaders of God’s people. And both were completely human. As such, both had to learn and grow and be nurtured into their ministries. In a similar way, the Psalm speaks of God as the one who strengthens all of creation – which responds in praise. Finally, in Colossians, God’s people are also called to learn and grow into the life of following Christ – a life of compassion, harmony and peace.

So, as much as we celebrate the divinity of Christ, and acknowledge that in him God has become flesh, the focus this week is on how the humanity of Jesus enabled him to understand and experience life as we do, and made it possible for him to be an example for us to follow. This means that we can’t use the divinity of Jesus as an excuse to accept lower standards for our lives than those embodied in his. His call for us to follow him is based in the truth that his life was completely human, and therefore completely accessible for us. It also means that as we follow Jesus, we do so with the same need to grow, learn, change, fail and develop as Jesus did. Our faith is not a doorway to a magical life free of the usual human struggles. Rather it is a pathway that enables us to journey through our humanity with deeper meaning, understanding and connectedness. The implications of following a human Christ will be the focus of our worship this week.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: In so many ways faith has been framed as a way to escape the struggles and injustices of the world. Social justice is still an uncomfortable, or forbidden, term in many segments of the Christian community. As we have focussed on the divinity of Christ and on the otherworldly heaven we believe he has won for us, we have become disconnected from our planet, from other people who believe and live differently from us, and even from our own flesh and blood – our own humanity. We have come to act as if our bodies didn’t matter and our spirits were the only "real" part of us. We have come to live as if the earth does not matter, since "it’s going to be all be destroyed in the end anyway". We have come to believe that our primary task in dealing with those who suffer is to get them to make a "faith decision", to agree with certain ideas in order to be "saved". The result is that many Christ-followers have refused to get involved in the work of feeding the hungry,

liberating the oppressed and healing the sick. And when we have done these things it has often been with a hidden agenda – to convert those we serve. If we are to take incarnation seriously, though, we will find ourselves taking embodiment seriously, taking the earth and our humanity seriously. Once this truth has captured us, we will inevitably begin to care more about serving and caring for people just because they are valuable as human beings. We will strive not to convert them, but to bring them to wholeness in whatever way is best for them. And we will seek to serve with an attitude of learning, humility and seeking to grow into wholeness together. The incarnation really does change how we engage in the world, if we will let it.

LOCAL APPLICATION: The humanity of the incarnate Christ has strong implications for our lives and ministry in our homes, communities, workplaces and neighbourhoods. When we recognise the extent to which God is concerned for the details of our lives, when we really embrace the incarnate nature of Christ, we can no longer devalue the daily realities we must face. If incarnation becomes the basis for our lives, we cannot help but heed the call to be always growing and learning. We cannot help but view this life as more than just a test for eternity, but as having value in and of itself. This means that we must become just as concerned for the physical, emotional and mental well-being of those around us as we are for their spiritual well-being. It means that we can no longer live with a dualistic view of ourselves, but must embrace the essential unity of spirit, mind and body, of God and creation. In the light of this we will discover that following Jesus means that we get involved in play, companionship, advocacy, service and acts of generosity as much as we are engaged in worship and evangelism. Suddenly we discover that so-called "spiritual" pursuits are not separate from our normal "human" pursuits. And out of all of this we will find that following Jesus becomes something that engages every facet of our lives – our relationships, our learning, our work, our leisure, our money, our values, our ethics and, yes, our spirituality. The Christ who grew, who challenged, who debated, who ate and learned becomes a true model for how we choose to live our lives, and how we can best bring life to those around us.

SERMON OUTLINE

Lk 2:41-52 every year his parents went to Jerusalem Christmas is a time for travelling – students returning home – family visiting – holidays in the sun – bad roads....

The Christmas narrative involves much travelling –

Mary & Joseph > Bethlehem; Shepherds > stable; magi > house holy family > Egypt > Nazareth > Jerusalem > *for the festival of the Passover when he was twelve years old.*

Next year he would become a Bar Mitzvah = son of the Law. M & J wanted him to experience something of the occasion - & he revelled in it – especially the Temple...

1. Losing – all sense of time – no watches/mobile phones - *the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem but his parents did not know it.* Imagine the panic for them as *they started to look for him among their relatives and friends* - & then travelled back to search for him. Eventually *After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers – content where he was..*

2. Listening – there were few intellectuals/scholars/good teachers in Nazareth > golden opportunity for young student – importance of Sunday School for our children!

3. Learning - *listening to them and asking them questions* – a wonderful learning experience for him – and them! - *all who heard him were amazed at his understanding*

and his answers. When his parents eventually found him in great anxiety, he calmly answered v49: 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' His mother v51 treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom & in years, & in divine & human favour.

So may we too grow in the Faith of Christ....

By Norman Porteous

SERMON

Just two days after celebrating Jesus' birth, Luke brings us the story of the approach of adulthood for Jesus. In Jewish law every adult male born within fifteen miles of Jerusalem has to attend the Passover. Indeed, all Jewish males at that time would wish to attend the feast at least once in their lifetime.

Adulthood began for a Jewish boy at the age of twelve. In becoming a man he also became a son of the law, and took the obligations of the law upon himself. This included attending the Passover for the first time. We can well imagine how this experience absorbs Jesus. The wonderful buildings of the city and the astonishing liturgies and rituals in the Temple doubtless fascinate him.

When his parents begin their journey home, Jesus lingers behind. From our 21st century perspective it seems astonishing that neither parent notices the absence of this young man. But it is not carelessness that causes them to miss him. It is normal for the women in a caravan to set out well before the men for they travel more slowly. The men catch up the women by nightfall when they encamp. It is Jesus' first Passover, and it is likely that each parent thinks that Jesus is with the other, until they find that he is not there in the evening. Those who have lost a child of any age, however fleetingly, will know the deep and instinctive fear, anguish, terror, which hits one the moment such a loss is discovered.

And so they return to Jerusalem, and they find him amongst the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court, presided over by the high priest. We should perhaps not imagine a scene with a precocious boy dominating a crowd of his seniors - as he has sometimes been portrayed down the centuries in art. It is more likely that he is hearing and asking questions - a regular Jewish expression for a student learning from his teachers. Jesus is listening and searching for knowledge like any bright 12 year old. And then comes one of the key passages in the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus. "Look", Mary says, "your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety". Jesus' reply seems at first to be extraordinary.

He appears to ignore the deep anxiety that Mary and Joseph must have felt. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?". Luke is very gently but very definitely showing us through this rebuke that Jesus' concept of father is moving from Joseph to God. It is a challenge and a steep learning curve for his parents. He is no longer solely bound to them or constrained by their expectations. Luke is telling us that Jesus has

come to the astonishing realisation that in some way that he has a unique and mysterious relationship with God the Father. That He is the unique Son of God.

This is the story of how Jesus became aware of the person he was. But we are not given any sense that he had become arrogant or headstrong as a result of this. He did not start to look down upon the gentle Mary and the hard working Joseph. Luke says that he went home with them and was obedient to them. Luke is underlining for us the link between Jesus' humanity and his divinity. There is also an important link here between Luke's expression of Jesus' natural ease and authority in the Temple and his account of Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem. For though the leaders are amazed at his understanding and his answers, their wonder has the potential to turn, as it did later, into hostility.

This story is also a challenge to faithful Israelites to raise their sights and to acknowledge that they cannot continue to be restrained by their own preconceived understandings. Now he is to transcend them and to be freed to move out to the Gentiles. Luke is almost certainly influenced here by the conflicts in the early church which had difficulty in reconciling itself with the Gentile mission. Like Mary and Joseph, the Jewish-Christian community had to learn not to constrict the freedom of the outreach which God's action in Jesus demanded. Nevertheless, this did not lessen the ties with the Jewish people, as Jesus' obedience to his parents indicates.

This story is also a challenge for us to accept Jesus for who he is – Son of God – and also for us to accept that God is not bound to accept and to fulfil our expectations. This story puts challenges before us at the start of a new year. Firstly, how deeply do we accept the divine mystery that Jesus' reveals here? How do we understand who Jesus is, and what his mission involves for us? And what are our expectations? If we dig deeply into our inner being do we find that we expect things to remain much as they are, with little or no change? Do we expect to resist change or to be open to it when it comes – both in our spiritual and secular lives? What is God expecting of us as individuals, as families, and as a Christian community in the coming year?

In seeking a way to look at these questions, this story, and Mary in particular, offers us a starting point. Luke is giving us much more than a pictorial or mental or emotional account of Jesus upbringing. Mary does not understand what she sees and hears. In common with us and all followers of Jesus, she must wait and see what will unfold, who he will become and where his Father will lead him. She stands with the Church itself, trusting that this child comes from God, consenting to obedience, and straining to understand. May we follow with her. Amen.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

["Christmastide: A Reminder Where Our Hearts Belong,"](http://day1.org/1676-christmastide_a_reminder_where_our_hearts_belong) the Rev. William McCord Thigpen, III, *Day 1*

http://day1.org/1676-christmastide_a_reminder_where_our_hearts_belong

www.churchnewsireland.org

["In the Temple,"](http://day1.org/1023-in_the_temple) the Rev. Dr. Barbara K. Lundblad, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/1023-in_the_temple

["Words to Live By; A Light to Guide,"](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2399) John R Donahue, SJ, *America*
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2399

["Compassion,"](http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-compassion) Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.
<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-compassion>

["Where Is Jesus?"](http://day1.org/4402-where_is_jesus) the Rev. Dr. Dwight Moody, *Day 1*
http://day1.org/4402-where_is_jesus

["The Word, the logos, the Christ,"](http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/12/22/1-christmas-c-2012/) the Rev. Kirk Alan Kubicek, *Sermons that Work*,
Episcopal Digital Network
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/12/22/1-christmas-c-2012/>

CHILDREN

["Worshiping with Children,"](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/year-christmas-eve-or-day.html) Christmas, Including children in the congregation's worship,
using the Revised Common Lectionary, Ordinary 25, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/year-christmas-eve-or-day.html>

["Sermon of the Week,"](http://www.sermons4kids.com/) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's
Sermons, Colouring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

["Christmas Prayer, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day,"](http://childrenssermonstoday.blogspot.co.uk/2011/12/christmas-eve.html) Dianne Deming, *Children's Sermons
Today*
<http://childrenssermonstoday.blogspot.co.uk/2011/12/christmas-eve.html>

["Storypath Lectionary Links: Connecting Children's Literature with our Faith Story,"](http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-sunday-december-27-2015/) Union
Presbyterian Seminary.
<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-sunday-december-27-2015/>

["On the Chancel Steps,"](https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/12/27/year2013/) children's resources by Frances Woodruff
<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/12/27/year2013/>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[All Creatures Of Our God And King](#)
[Jesus, Lord, We Look To Thee](#)
[O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee](#)
[Dear Jesus, In Whose Life I See](#)
[Be Thou My Vision](#)
[Give Thanks](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)
[All The Way My Saviour Leads Me](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)
[God Of Justice](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title