

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Christmas 2
Saturday, January 4, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, January 5, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

“Lost for Three Days”

Luke 2:40-52

This narrative of Jesus staying in Jerusalem at the Temple while Mary and Joseph head home seems very odd in our modern world. Parents heading out, leaving a child, and not realizing it for an entire day. Luke 2 is not a prequel to the “Home Alone” movies. My children are adults now, so this is no longer an issue, but I can’t imagine, back in the day, driving home from vacation, cruising into West Quincy and saying to the girls, “Look, there is the bridge. We’re almost home.” And Malinda looks back and says “Oops! We forgot one!”

People traveled differently back in Jesus’ day. They traveled by caravan. According to the law of Moses, all men were required to come to Jerusalem for Passover. If they were able, the women and children would also come. There was probably no one left in Nazareth unless some mother had just had a baby and was ceremonially unclean and therefore couldn’t travel (one of the ways in which God was looking out for the daughters of Abraham). The whole town, and others, would be traveling together. Friends, neighbors, cousins would all be

jumbled up and mingling with each other as they walked along the road.

Also, in those days, a 12 year old boy would have been expected to be responsible enough to know the departure time and place. After all, girls typically got married around age 14 or 15. If a 14 year old girl can manage a household, a 12 year old boy can know when it is time to leave and go home. Also, as a 12 year old, Jesus would be almost ready for Bar-Mitzvah (which means Jesus is almost considered an adult.) It would be easy to believe Jesus was tagging along with the men. Mary could assume so.

However, because He is not yet of age, it would be easy to believe Jesus was with the women and other children. Joseph could assume so. Mary and Joseph were not being irresponsible or negligent in their parental duties. They had every reason to believe that Jesus would be departing with them. Jesus was not being disrespectful or sinful by staying in Jerusalem. Being “lost” for three days in Jerusalem was a foreshadowing of greater things to come.

As you read through the Gospels, there are many things that amaze me. The humanity of Jesus is near the top of the list. The Son of God lowered Himself and took on the full nature of man. We have spent the past few weeks celebrating Jesus coming to earth as a baby. On Christmas Day, during communion distribution, we sang “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” — although I don’t think we got through all 15 verses.

When you think about how complete was the humiliation of the Almighty

Living God. As the hymn writers says in verse nine, “Ah, Lord, though You created all, How weak You are, so poor and small.” He took on all the weaknesses of a little child. He endured all the frustration of being a 12 year-old (where you are not considered an adult, but you are not really a small child anymore). You are given responsibilities, but you don’t have any authority in the eyes of the adults.

I understand the burden and it is something I talk about with my Confirmation class and with the 5th and 6th graders at St. James. Those “children” are only a few years away from being considered an adult and will be responsible for adult decisions. I tell them to make sure they don’t wait until they are 17 and a half before they seek out more responsibility. I tell them to demand that their parents give them more responsibility while they still have the safety net of living under their parent’s roof.

Here is Jesus, who has more “authority” than anyone, yet in the eyes of everyone around Him, He doesn’t. The book of Hebrews says that Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses because He was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin.

Jesus is born and lives on the earth in humility, suppressing His glory and not exercising His authority – though He is the Creator of all. He lives in obedience to Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, but He belongs somewhere else.

Jesus remains behind in Jerusalem. Jesus remains at the Temple where

He belongs. The Son belongs in His Father's House. Jesus says, "I must be in My Father's House." He also belongs in Jerusalem, because that is where He is destined to be. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus must be in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is not where He would live. He would live in obedience to Joseph and Mary in Nazareth. But Jesus belongs in Jerusalem, because Jerusalem is where He will die.

Jesus must question and be questioned by the Jewish leaders. On this day, we hear Jesus give answers that amaze and astonish the people during His three days seemingly lost as a 12 year-old.

This is not the last time Jesus would be questioned by the Jewish leaders. This is not the last time Jesus would amaze and astonish the people with His words.

Jesus will come to the Feast of Passover many times in His life, as He was not only obedient to Joseph and Mary, but He was obedient to the will of His Father in heaven also.

The final time Jesus comes to Jerusalem, He will also have a three day period where He is seemingly lost. And as He is "found" on the day of His resurrection, He will amaze and astonish all who see and hear Him. Amen.