

“Twelve Things”

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Colossians 3.12-17

Luke 2.41-52

December 26, 2021

The scripture reading for today is an interesting choice for the lectionary. We just read the birth of Christ. On January sixth, Epiphany, we read a passage in which Jesus is just a few years old when the magi visit him. Today, however, we read about when Jesus was twelve.

This is the only passage that talks about Jesus between the ages of three and 32. Some have assumed it was because Jesus was unaware of who he was in those times and no one really wants their awkward teenage years documented for others to read. Others just thought it wasn't important in the grand picture of the Gospels. Perhaps that makes this passage stand out even more, because it is the one that was actually included in the canon.

I do like to mention that there are other writings that were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls that did talk about Jesus' infancy, but they were found much later after the canon was created, and did not portray Jesus in a Divine light. It tells of a very human boy just learning what ultimate power he has, and how he learns from his mistakes.

Yet here we see Jesus, the pre-teen, becoming the human Divine we see later in his life. We know that faith was important to him, as was his family. Though, his family is panicked in this passage. They all went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. When the festivities were over his parents cannot find him. They search all day and all night – three entire days go by before they find him in the temple. He was learning, but he was also asking incredibly intelligent questions.

Like most parents do, like I imagine I would do if my child went missing for three days, the parents ask why. Mary asks him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” Mary, this blessed woman, is a tired and exhausted and frustrated parent and asks a very ordinary parent question: “Why would you do this to me?”

Jesus answers them with two questions. If we didn't know better it almost sounds like a typical pre-teen response, but we also know Jesus was the BEST at answering with provocative questions. “Why were you searching for me?” he asks. “Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” It is as if he is saying, “Don't you even know me?”

When we are tired, when we are anxious, when we are stressed, we often ask questions that circle back to ourselves – why did you do this to me? Why didn't you think about our anxiety? Though, when I read this passage, I think about how in child psychology, behavior is communication. Children, even adults, are often trying to communicate through behavior. If a child throws a fit after a long day of excitement at a water park they might be communicating exhaustion or overstimulation or hunger. If an adult is an alcoholic, the behavior of drinking is

often an unhealthy way of expressing an emotion like loneliness or sadness or depression. Behavior is communication – and we can communicate in a positive way, or a negative way.

I can't say whether or not Jesus should have told his parents he was going to leave – maybe this needed to happen so Mary could see him differently. Or so we could have this story so that we knew the importance of his faith at a young age. I do know that when he ran to the temple, it had nothing to do with his parents – which is a difficult lesson for any of us to learn – that often someone else's behavior has nothing to do with us – it often has to do with what is going on within that person.

I could preach on this passage all day, but I thought, because it's the day after Christmas, let's look within ourselves, let's do something fun and different. So, I thought we'd start with the number twelve. Twelve is an important number in the Bible. There were twelve disciples and apostles. There were twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus was twelve in this passage. There are twelve days of Christmas. It's not a magical number that will help you win the lotto, but I thought it would be fun to explore it a bit.

So, you have a paper in front of you that has twelve questions to ponder. We'll take a few minutes and think about ourselves and the future year and how we would like to live out the good news in these small ways. You don't have to share, so you don't have to worry about that.

In the coming year we have opportunities to choose compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. If Christ rules in our hearts we are on the right path. Thanks be to God. Amen.

1. List one thing you are grateful for in 2021
2. How did someone show you kindness this year?
3. What would bring you peace in the new year?
4. Think of one person you are thankful for
5. Think of one way you can show the person in number 4 you care
6. What was something you learned about your faith this year?
7. What is something you grieved this year?
8. What do you look forward to in 2022?
9. What is the one thing most important to you?
10. How do you spend your Sabbath?
11. Where is there light shining in your life right now?
12. Pause. Take three deep breaths. What do you hear?