

1 Christmas  
1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26  
Psalm 148  
Colossians 3:12-17  
Luke 2; 41-52

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Holy Spirit Lutheran Church

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Grace and Peace to you all from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – Amen.

This morning's gospel always reminds me of the movie *Home Alone* - a nineties Christmas classic that tells the story of a separated family over the holiday season and the lengths a mother will go to, to be reunited with her son. If you haven't seen it in a while – it is definitely worth a watch this holidays!

In the fictional movie, 8-year-old Kevin McCallister finds himself at odds with his family as they prepare to leave for a trip to Paris over the holidays. Seemingly too young to help the adults pack, too immature to hang out with his older cousins, and too old to play with the little kids – Kevin finds himself feeling left out and ignored when he decides to take matters into his own hands. He works out a plan to get the attention he has always wanted in one of the worst ways possible. He causes a catastrophic prank to unfold on his entire extended family – leaving them all in a shell shocked state for the evening.

As the dust settles, and tensions reach their height, the young boy is marched before his family to apologize for his actions. However, in the heat of the moment, rather than say he is sorry, the young boy simply yells out at the top of his lungs, "I wish you all never existed!"

Disappointed and at her wits end Kevin's mother escorts him up to the attic to sleep for the night as his punishment.

But the next morning, in their rush to leave, the McCallister family mistakenly depart for the airport without Kevin in tow, and he wakes up to find an empty house and assumes his wish to no longer have a family has come true!

However, his excitement quickly wanes when he realizes that being home alone isn't all it's cracked up to be. It's actually a lot of hard work! Between shopping, doing laundry, and defending your house from burglars there isn't much time left at the end of the day for opening presents.

While this movie leans heavily on your ability to suspend your sense of reason, this story also calls upon every parent's worst nightmare – the possibility of losing your child in the midst of the busy holiday season with no way of knowing where they might be or when you will ever come to see them again.

A fear Mary and Joseph came to experience first hand when they realized Jesus had not followed them home from the Passover festival that year.

And like any good parents would, they began frantically searching for their son through the migrating crowd, as a sinking feeling began to well up from the pit of their stomachs when Jesus was no where to be found. Immediately overtaken by parental concern they turned from Nazareth and begin to retrace their steps back to Jerusalem.

As the festival city was a few days' journey from their home town – it likely gave them more than enough time to worry about what might have happened to their son. But when they found Jesus safe and sound in the temple talking with and teaching the elders – they couldn't help but remain frantic, and even angry with Jesus for causing them to carry this level of anxiety for this long.

In fact, you can almost hear their inner dialog as the gospel goes on:

*Yes, it's great that he is alive, and yes, it's good to see him sitting with teachers and discussing religious matters, but he can't even begin to understand what he has put us through! How should we deal with our son's carelessness?*

And almost like an exclamation point to the moment – Mary's voice breaks through their thoughts and the temples tranquillity as she lets Jesus have it in the midst of the teachers gathered around him — *"Child, why have you treated us like this?"*

As her words settle among the crowd, a tense silence begins to hang in air, as clearly Jesus parents have forgotten their son isn't like the rest of the twelve year olds visiting the festival city this year.

While I will be the first to admit that *Home Alone's* Kevin McCalister is a far cry from the young Christ we come to meet in this mornings gospel, both seem to have families that struggle to understand them at their core.

In Jesus case, his parents seem to be suffering from some form of amnesia connected to the night he was born – because they can't fathom why Jesus would think he should be teaching the elders at the temple rather than following them home.

After all Mary and Joseph fully believe they have done all they were religiously obligated to do when it came to their young child's visits to the temple years ago.

They had presented him to be blessed and circumcised, they had brought him to the synagogue to learn from the teachers, and they had made sure he attended all the festivals of the Jewish faith.

Mary and Joseph had *“finished everything required by the law of the Lord”* ... and as far as they were concerned they had dotted all their I’s and crossed all their T’s when it came to his place in the temple.

They had just forgotten that their son also happened to be the Son of God.

But Jesus parents aren’t the only ones who happen to forget or misunderstand their Son at times.

We, as followers of Christ within the church have come to know the stories of the Gospel so well that we can get too comfortable with Jesus at times as well.

Like his parents we begin to presume to know where he should be and what he should be doing. And as a result, at times, we have confused the power of the gospel with the powers of our world – leaving us to believe that we will only find Christ where we are most comfortable.

Or perhaps we might even be tempted to think Jesus teachings don’t pertain to us anymore – after all don’t we already know his story, the creeds, and Luther’s catechism by heart ... haven’t we done enough to prove we are the ones in charge?

Soon enough, it’s easy to find ourselves in Mary and Joseph’s shoes – wondering how we got to this moment, in awe of Jesus and yet ashamed for not knowing better - we too might need to admit where we have failed to understand and follow what Jesus has been trying to teach us all along.

That we, like Mary and Joseph, are an important part of this Holy Family – but we aren’t the ones calling the shots – Christ is already out within our world – Emmanuel, God with us – waiting for us to rediscover his holy and surprising presence among us.

Yet, even in the midst of this moment of humbling humility, this gospel takes its most interesting and grace filled turn yet – as Mary and Joseph openly share they “don’t understand their son – nevertheless they treasure him and all they can’t seem to understand in their heart” and Jesus chooses to go back to Nazareth with his earthly parents to live with them as their son.

Jesus doesn't give up on his family - even when they don't understand him or his calling within this world.

And he certainly doesn't give up on us.

That's the promise of this Christmas season we come to celebrate.

That God, the creator of the universe – chooses time and time again to lay aside both power and privilege to be born with and among us.

Even when Jesus Holy Family doesn't understand the very son angels heralded into their presence – he still extends a hand of grace and understanding, looking for the ways he can invite them again to experience and know the promise and depth of God's love.

And like a mother searching for their lost child – there is no length God wouldn't go to, to be reunited with us all.

That is the promise God continues to extend today.

That God is relentlessly with us in grace, in hope, and in love.

And may this promise be so among us as we celebrate this Christmas - Amen.