

## 1 Christmas C

~~1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26~~

Psalm 148

Colossians 3:12-17

Luke 2:41-52

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Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Edmonton

*93<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Social Distancing*

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Grace and peace to you from the newborn Savior who is the gift of the world. Amen.

How are you doing? Are you still breathing, still smiling, still pondering? If you're tired and worn out that's quite alright too. As beautiful as Christmas is, at times and for many, it can be difficult, exhausting, trying. Breathe with it. You are not alone.

Psalm 148 is a psalm of praise for the God who is a "with us" God. It sets the tone for us immediately after Christmas, to remind us that Jesus came into the world, not just for us, but for all Creation! And so we hear the proclamation of heaven, waters, sea monsters, fire, hail, snow, even creeping things, sun and moon, mountains and hills... a full circle declaration of the web of life of which we are a part. No, we are not and never have been alone!

The "God-with-us" story that was told the last few days, of course described the familiar and beautiful scene of Mary, Joseph, and a stable. The story however, eliminates the deep effort of labor literally necessary to bring new life into being. Mary and Joseph, we can imagine, were exhausted from their journey and then the birthing. Rest was essential before they and Jesus could begin the next leg of their journey. Today we find them well on their way, several years later at the festival of Passover.

Passover might seem out of place to our Christmas celebrations; we more readily connect it to the week of Jesus' passion leading to his death. But, here, as a young family, they abide by the seasonal marking of the year. They are a family dedicated to God, using the traditions of their people to teach and infuse the Word into everyday life. Luke includes this childhood story – not to call out Mary and Joseph as negligent parents - but to point to Jesus as God's son.

Luke identifies Jesus as growing into adulthood. The story adds to his humanity, of Jesus being both fully divine and fully human. Luke doesn't rush the revealing of this God-in-the-flesh-Jesus, but let's us enjoy a childhood moment that many families can relate to of a wayward child. This is life, real life and things happen.

Don't we understand that statement! Life happens yes, and is often unpredictable. It can sweep the feet right out from under us in joy or sadness.

Our days have been peppered with unusual events and happenings that sometimes have left us feeling like the wind has been knocked out of us. Like Mary and Joseph who frantically search for Jesus – we too search for answers to the cobbled path of our days.

In search of peace, acceptance, and security we buy into all kinds of things to bring composure to our restless hearts: self-help videos and programs, security monitors, cameras, identity theft protection, books and calming lotions and misters, even a basic box of tissue to dab away tears – still at times it feels as if nothing can match for what we sometimes experience.

Luke's story reminds us that our search is over in Jesus.

Jesus said he was in his Father's house. This isn't a slight on Joseph who traditionally holds the place of Jesus' father, but is Luke's way of helping us make the connection between God and Jesus. We've already heard more than one proclamation about Jesus' identity. If you remember, Elizabeth's baby leap for joy in meeting the in-utero Jesus. At his birth angels, sang, shepherds came and Wise men brought gifts. What's different here however, is that for the first time, Jesus himself, at the cusp of adulthood, himself claims his relationship with God. With all the searching that was done - Jesus is found in the most obvious place of his day, the Temple, God's house.

This is the way God works. Obvious. In regular places, in everyday places, in you and your neighbour, in churches, Mosques and Synagogues. God can be found in family gatherings (even when they're online!) in prayers carried by the Holy Spirit, in nature's beauty, where ever forgiveness, acceptance, or love abound. God is found in communion shared, in the waters of birth and baptism and the end of life. The beauty of the Christmas Story is that it doesn't really need updating or bright colored wrapping paper – it just needs to be told, the same, familiar, timeless story of God with us.

When we learn it well, we can tell it well. When we tell it well it is inscribed on our hearts. When we know it by heart we know it is the hope that we search for in our human experience. God becomes obvious to us whether we're at a hospital bedside, at the front line for human rights, silently forging new pathways for welcome, inclusion and understanding. Writing the story of God-with-us in our hearts, gives us a touchstone for grief and loss, a map to guide our way through uncertainty, and comfort even in times of a pandemic.

This story, God, is with us. Travelling to Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, to Edmonton, alleyways, bedrooms, broken families, separated friends, strangers – we encounter an obvious God in signs everywhere. Don't waste your time searching for a new and improved Jesus. Look for the old stable, the bright star,

the comforting prayer, the words "I love you" whispered for the 1000<sup>th</sup> time. Look into the eyes of your friends and loved ones. Read the story of Jesus again and again. Take the bread and the wine, join in worship, feed the hungry, help the poor. Never was there a better way to search for Jesus, because he is here, right among us.

Amen.