

Luke 2:41-52  
Christmas 1C  
Pastor Lauren Dow Wegner

I don't have a twelve year-old in my house,  
But I will one day.

And I do interact regularly with twelve year-olds as a  
pastor and youthworker.

And any of us who have worked with or raised adolescents  
probably aren't too surprised by the interchange in our Gospel  
today between Jesus and his parents.

After searching for her son for three days,  
Upon finding him,

an exasperated mother Mary asks, "Child, why have  
you treated us like this?"

What mother of a teen or pre-teen hasn't asked that question at  
some point--

"Whyyyyyy are you acting this way?"

And in response, what teen or pre-teen hasn't retorted in the  
same way Jesus does today?

"Why were you even looking for me?

Didn't you know where I'd be?

Why are you freaking out?"

Twelve years old is the beginning of what can be a hard set of  
years.

And for all you teens and pre-teens hearing this,

Know that you are exactly as you have been created to be--

You aren't being "bad" or "wrong" by being a teenager,

Or by asking "Why?"

Or by getting frustrated with your parents.  
It's the way your brain has been wired at this age,  
We've all been there, too.  
You're growing and becoming,  
And we love you,  
And God loves you.

So Jesus was being a typical 12 year-old.  
And his parents were being typical worried parents,  
And so much about this Gospel is so relatable. . .  
And also familiar.

It hearkens back to our first reading in 1 Samuel,  
Connecting the boy Jesus to the boy Samuel in the temple,  
Both of them described as increasing in wisdom and  
stature,  
growing in favor with God and with people.

Samuel, who will one day anoint David as King of Israel.  
Jesus, whose lineage goes back to David.

Our readings seem to be paired in order to reveal for us that what  
Jesus is doing in the temple is directly connected to the faithful  
prophets who have gone before him,  
Directly connected to the whole arc of God's story of  
salvation.

We need this story of 12 year-old Jesus to remind us again of that  
long thread of faithfulness,  
Prophecy,  
Anointing,  
Kingship into which Messiah Jesus has been  
born.

I think the age of Jesus is important here.

Because we're merely a week out from the celebration of his birth,

We've been heralding the baby in the manger,  
The visitation of the shepherds and the angels,  
Singing the lullabies and proclaiming the  
joyful announcement of his birth in the world.

We're a week out from the celebration of his birth,

But Jesus is no longer a baby in our Gospel lesson.

12 years have passed.

Next week,

We'll bounce back to his early newborn days when the wise men visit him at Epiphany.

But after that, time marches on,

And we move into the important ministry and teaching and healing,

We move towards the passion,

Death,

Resurrection.

Jesus doesn't get to stay a baby for very long in our liturgical calendar.

Sure, the most significant moments of Jesus' life occur when he's an adult,

But those were far from the only moments of his life.

Today we sit with the fact that Jesus did not remain a baby forever,

And he also didn't just appear as a full-grown adult.

Jesus lived through all the stages in between.

And he was Messiah in all the stages in between.

Jesus is Messiah in all of our stages in between, too.

In this Christmas season that is so often a marker for us of how much life has changed,

Of how many years have flown by,

We gather in this place to remember that Jesus is the same...

That the story of God's love come down to us is the same...

That the humanity of this God who has come down to us is the same as our humanity:

He was an infant,  
an adolescent boy,  
a grown man.

And that that human infant--boy--man is also God,  
Divine infant--boy--man.

Who dies for us.

Rises for us.

Saves us.

The story doesn't change.

The faithfulness of God doesn't change,

Even though we do.

Christmas may be the most tradition-focused season there is,  
With each ornament on our tree telling the same story year after year,

With the same traditional meals and sing-alongs and gift exchanges.

With worship here at Grace or elsewhere,

But regardless, it better include all that we expect and hope for each Christmas Eve and

Day.  
And when these plans change--  
    Someone gets sick,  
        Travel plans fall through,  
            Someone isn't alive anymore,  
                Then we feel it.  
                    The season may not be ruined,  
                        But it's not what it used to be.  
                            Life changes.

This morning, two babies are brought to this font.  
And they will continue to be babies when they leave from  
here,  
    And grow into toddlers,  
        Then young children,  
            And then they will be 12 year-old pre-teens  
                who will confound their parents,  
                    And be confounded by their parents.

They will grow in wisdom and stature,  
    Faith and grace.  
They will change.  
    But what happens at this font will not.  
No matter what age or stage Hunter and Frida are ever living in,  
    The promises of the Messiah are changeless and  
    everlasting.  
Washed free from sin and welcomed into new life as God's child,  
    Hunter and Frida and all the baptized--  
        Babies,  
            Adolescents,  
                Adults,  
    Newborn,  
        Or near death,  
All are held in the changeless,

Timeless,  
Eternal love of Jesus Christ.

When we come to this Table,  
we receive bread and wine,  
the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The same body that was born in the manger.

The same body that sat among the teachers in the temple as  
a pre-teen.

The same blood that coursed through the veins of a  
man who died on a cross for us.

No matter what age or stage we are living in,

The promises of the Messiah are changeless and  
everlasting.

Babies,

Adolescents,

Adults,

Newborn,

Or near death,

We are fed and nourished by his body and blood,

Strengthened by the timeless,

Eternal love of Jesus Christ.

Yes, today we have the 12 year-old Boy-Messiah who freaked out  
his parents,

Doing what adolescents do.

Nothing has changed.

And today we have the 12 year-old Boy-Messiah amazing the  
temple teachers,

And also showing up for us here in water,

Word,

Bread,

Wine,

And each other.

Doing what Jesus does.

Nothing has changed.

Thanks be to God for that.