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Episcopal Church of the Incarnation

January 4, 2025

Second Sunday After Christmas

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalm 84:1-8

Ephesians 1: 3-6, 15-19

Luke 2: 41-52

So this is Christmas What Have You Done, the theologian John Lennon asks in this subtle and for me haunting lyric. I particularly like the second phrase, *What Have You Done*.

In just ten days we have gone from *the babe in swaddling* to the twelve-teen *Jesus in the Temple*, and on Tuesday, we will go back in time to Jesus receiving in some graced way the Magi, the sorcerers from the East.

This is Kairos, God's time, and not Chronos, as our watches tick away.

This well-known and yet ever startling story in the gospel of Luke tells of a very young but clearly very focused Jesus, perhaps called Yeshu by his friends, *Chuy in Espanol*, with his parents on their annual trek to celebrate Passover. Jerusalem must have been a crowded, and these travelers, having come all the way from

Nazareth, in Galilee, joined faithful Jews in droves of caravans to be present for the High Holy Days.

There was a festival, a celebration, and perhaps, some kind of fair, a time to be with relatives, to visit the Temple, to be in the big city.

As the holy days came to an end, Jesus' parents joined their homeward-bound caravan for the long-haul north. Their presumption, no doubt, was that their boy Jesus was amidst the familiar and comforting company of local kin. But, having paternal concerns, they wandered among the camels and asses and wagons, looking for Jesus. They did not find him.

Now more than anxious, or, as one ancient scribe translated it: tortured and I bet, his parents determined to return to Jerusalem to find him still there, hoping no harm had come to their precious, and evidently precocious, child. They roamed the cobbled streets, to no avail. Perhaps out of desperation, after three days of search, and wanting to pray for divine intervention, they entered the Temple. And lo, there was this holy preteen speaking, even preaching, to the wise elders—the chief rabbi and his retinue—who, as Luke points out, were astounded by his wisdom and the depth of his questions.

Mary was not the passive, serene Mary of so much Renaissance portraiture. I suspect was furious: *Child, why have you treated us like this? We have been looking for you with great anxiety.*

Their boy responds: *Why were you searching for me? Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?* Hebrew scripture rarely uses Father as an appellation for God, but Jesus introduces this intimate word—the Irish say *Da*, rural Americans and many Latinos might say

Papa — to describe the One whose son he was and whose work he was now about.

The next couple of days on the trip back north to Nazareth must have been an occasion for a long family conversation, one typically no one wants but the parents seem to regard it as necessary. We can only conjecture, but I daresay Jesus knew what he knew, and he knew it prior to visiting the Temple. And he knew what he knew, in ways that were impossible to share, even in the shielding confines of his home.

So This Is Christmas, What Have You Done?

Jesus was called to go to that temple. It was, too, an implicit acknowledgement that Mary and Joseph, and loving as they were, did not provide everything he needed. Rather, he sought the accumulated wisdom of these elders, these teachers, those who had spent their lives trying to interpret and hopefully understand the ways of the divine and to grapple with the meanings of their sacred history, and this fundamental relation with the Holy.

Yet, Jesus awed them even as he desired greater knowledge, I would offer, a greater consciousness, a fully being alive, called to fully embracing his Jesus-ness. The Christological awareness of this twelveteen seems to be slowly emerging. Though he did not start his public ministry for twenty-one more years, his unwitting ministry goes back to the shepherds, their sheep and the lowing cows, back to the Magi, and now to the temple. One can only imagine Jesus between the age of twelve and thirty.

The next verses merely note Jesus increased in wisdom, and in years, in divine and human favor.

What do we need at the Temple, whether that be this scared space we inhabit, Incarnation, or in our homes, or in Armstrong Woods, or as we do are work in the world, or as we sit and pray each day?

I suspect we need, as Jesus did, as highlighted in the Gospel, others to invest in us, to broaden our knowledge, to invites us to greater consciousness, to challenge us to be fully alive, to let us know what we *do not* know but perhaps thought we did. This latter, an essential gift.

But as we seek out our *rabbis*—ordained by mostly not—we must be ready for change, real change, significant change. Jesus did not return to Nazareth as the same boy who went to Festival, but one whose work was illuminated by these wise teachers, the ones he sought out. He did not waste their time, he absorbed, and he shared, all he could.

And what do you need now? Where exactly am I, are you, and where might the One we worship, this ineffable Da, this Holy Center of our lives, be taking us? How can we be present to the divine urgings we sense, we feel, we experience? Am I, are you, open to the challenge, and the discomfort such change will no doubt include, and how much *unknowing* am I, are you, willing to experience?

We often make resolutions for the new year: mine have included—for many decades—lose weight, workout more, walk every day, meditate every morning, do yoga, clear out the accumulated clutter of my life...you know, the longer the list the better. So ambitious, so bogus and so self-deceiving. And who am I kidding?

But what are the interior changes, the ones these divine intimations move us toward?

Is the God you worship one of your own making, a grand projection to always be managing and assert? One whose name might be tradition or rules or perfectionism, often without space for the truly divine command: Love. Or maybe the path of power, riches and glory, the God of the Prosperity Gospel, and maybe our secret one, too?

We cannot manage the Holy One, the author of life, of my life, and yours.

Jesus went to the temple to move more deeply into being Jesus, to accept his holy-beyond-measure call, to be in the presence of the One he Called Father, Abba, *You*.

We came into this redwood temple this morning, for the same reasons Jesus did: to move more deeply into being ourselves, to embrace our call to be loved, and to love, to be in the presence of the One we call by many names: Father, Holy One, Creator, Ground of Being, Divine Love, *You Whose I am*.

This is *what we have done*. We came to this holy space, with nothing but ourselves, I would say our holy selves, to move into more deeply Kairos time, as we let Chronos time, take care of the clock.

Another year over, a new one just begun...

