

“And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day’s journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

Well, here we are, observing the first Sunday of a new calendar year. In and of itself that is nothing special. After all, is anything really different, simply because the calendar has changed from 2024 to 2025? In so many ways, one day is the same as all the others. Yes, we do mark some days as special. For most people, Christmas is right at the top of that “special day” list. We have the special days that mark anniversaries and birthdays. We look forward to special days like our wedding day or graduation day or the birth of our first child. But be honest—even though we may mark certain days with special events, celebrations, meals or activities, the truth is that one day is pretty much the same as the next day.

If that sounds a bit boring, let me draw your hearts to the words of the psalmist, who reminds us: ***“This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”*** (Psalm 118:24, ESV) Each and every day we live in and under the grace of our God. We live in the joy of knowing our God is with us. We live in the confidence of His perfect love for us, made known so clearly all that Christ has done for us. By the grace of God, we seek to live each day as Jesus Himself did; living each day to His glory; living each day to go about our Father’s business.

We gather together today on the first Sunday of the new year with most of the busyness of Christmas behind us. Some people have the decorations down and put away for another year. There are gifts which have been returned or exchanged. The Christmas break is over and so it is back to school and back to work. For many, it is business as usual.

That was true for Mary and Joseph and their family, too. There had been some hectic and difficult days this family that started even before Jesus was born. First it was the trek to Bethlehem where the Christ was born. Then it was the frantic journey to Egypt to escape from Herod’s wrath, as he plotted to kill the Child, seeing Him as an usurper to his throne. After Herod died, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said: ***“Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.”*** (Matthew 2:20, ESV) All of these things take place in fulfillment of all God had said through the prophets. Even the fact that they settle in Nazareth was declared by God’s plan and purpose in advance and Matthew tells us: ***“And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.”*** (Matthew 2:23, ESV)

After all the excitement of those first years, life in Nazareth must have seemed like business as usual—if there really could be anything usual in a home where Mary and Joseph had the duty of raising God’s own Son in the faith, seeing to it that he was trained in all of God’s Law. That seems strange to us. Why would the holy, sinless and all-knowing God need to learn and grow like any other child? Yet this is part of our God becoming one with us in our humanity. Mary and Joseph have been entrusted with a great task. God chose well, for we see Mary and Joseph living to the glory of God as they carried out their tasks. This doesn’t mean that their home was without any struggles, conflicts or any of the things that seem to fill our homes day by day. I’m sure that Mary and Joseph had their disagreements. By this time they have other children—four of whom are named for us in Scripture: James and Joseph and Simon and Judas. (Matthew 13:55, ESV) Jesus had sisters, too! How many of them are born at the time of our text we don’t know, but we can well imagine that their home was really no different than your home or my home, with squabbling children and nagging parents. Yet there was one exception: the sinless Son of God was always sinless,

even in His life as a child, a youth and a young adult.

Now, in the normal routine of their lives, we come to the events in our text today: *Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.* It was expected of God's faithful to go up to Jerusalem on a regular basis to worship at the chief festivals, especially Passover. Every year this family went up to the feast. This year, with their Son reaching the age Jewish custom called spiritual young adulthood, it was important to note that Jesus went along. The family was faithful in fulfilling the law's demands.

Things get interesting as they begin their journey home. The family sets out and even though Mary and Joseph don't see Jesus we are told: *supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey.* Now they notice that Jesus isn't among them. They search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, suddenly realizing He must still be in Jerusalem. Now they return, maybe sending the other siblings home with their relatives. They search frantically for three days, finally coming back to the temple where they see Him *sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.*

We are not surprised by Mary's reaction. Concerned and worried about her son she speaks for both herself and Joseph. *"Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."* But for Jesus, there is a greater purpose here. *And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.*

The English Standard Version text speaks of Jesus being in His Father's house. The King James translation says (although I'll use the New King James to make it easier for you to follow): *"Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"* (Luke 2:49, NKJV) The actual phrase in Greek is something like, "were you not aware it is necessary that I be in connection with the things of my Father?" I like the view of being about the Father's business. Jesus may have been only a young man, but for Him it was business as usual. His whole life was part of God's plan and purpose for our salvation.

We know what the Father's business is. In his great hymn, *Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice*, Luther describes this Scriptural truth for us: *God said to His beloved Son: "It's time to have compassion. Then go, bright jewel of My crown, And bring to all salvation. From sin and sorrow set them free; Slay bitter death for them that they May live with You forever."* (LSB 556, st. 5) How blessed we are to know that Christ has carried out all of God's work for us. Again, as Luther notes: *The Son obeyed His Father's will, Was born of virgin mother; And God's good pleasure to fulfill, He came to be my brother. His royal pow'r disguised He bore; A servant's form, like mine, He wore To lead the devil captive.* (LSB 556, st. 6)

In the temple we see Jesus about His Father's business. That business will eventually take Him to the cross where He will give His holy, sinless life as the payment for our sinfulness. It will continue as the suffering and dying Saviour rises again from the dead. It continues as the victorious and ascended Lord continues to rule over all things in heaven and on earth for the sake of His church. In His conception, His birth, His time in the temple; yes, through His earthly ministry, suffering, death and resurrection, He will carry out about the Father's business, accomplishing all that needs to be done for us and for our deliverance from sin, death and hell.

All that Christ has done for us allows us to be about our Father's business, too. Some of that business is about being in God's house. We need to be here because we are not always about the business of our Father. Instead of carrying out His business we focus on our own business that flows from the sinful desires of our selfish and stubborn hearts. That is why we need to come here to gather around His Word and Sacrament. We come to be fed, equipped and strengthened for all that He would have us do. The prophet Micah reminds us: *"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (Micah 6:8, ESV) Paul will build on this, reminding us: *"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."*

(Galatians 6:10, ESV)

Today we are observing Lutheran Women's Missionary League Sunday here at Foothills. The LWML seek to be about the Lord's business in their support of mission work and in their encouragement for the church's ministry. As the LWML pledge says: *we pledge Him our willing service wherever and whenever He has need of us. We consecrate to our Saviour our hands to work for Him, our feet to go on His errands, our voice to sing His praises, our lips to proclaim His redeeming love, our silver and our gold to extend His kingdom, our will to do His Will, and every power of our life to the great task of bringing the lost and erring into eternal fellowship with Him.*

This is the business to which God calls us, but it is work we only carry out because the Saviour did all that needs to be done

for you, for me and for all people. Our stresses, our sins, the hurts, the sicknesses, the worries of our world, our fears about how God sees us—Jesus has taken care of them all. He has seen to it, by finishing every task the Father gave Him. We are blessed to know that He will continue to bless our efforts to His glory as we go about our Father's business, through the One who has done all for us: Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.