



**Ardoch and Blackford
Parish Churches
Sunday 26th December 2021
Finding Jesus**

Today we turn to the only childhood reference to Jesus outside of the Christmas Nativity accounts. As a 12 year old, Jesus joins Mary, Joseph and probably a good crowd of folk from Nazareth on the trip to Jerusalem for the Passover.

**When he doesn't join them to go back, the searching begins.
Many people find Jesus, but not everyone.**

Although the temple where these events take place no longer exists, we worship God wherever we may be. Paul even writes,

“ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Corinthians 6:19.)

So let's draw near to God as we sing or read our first hymn

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
praise God, my soul, for in him are your health and salvation;
come, all who hear; into his presence draw near,
joining in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who in all things is wondrously reigning;
shields you from harm and is gently yet firmly sustaining.
Have you not seen how your heart's wishes have been
granted by God's wise ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who with blessing and power will defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you;
ponder anew what the Almighty can do:
God will forever befriend you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the Amen sound from God's people again:
gladly for ever adore him.

Words: Joachim Neander, Music: Catherine Winkworth © Public Domain

We approach God in prayer

Almighty God, King of creation and Lord of all eternity, we bring you our praise as a part of your creation; the most loved part of your creation. We encourage our own souls to worship you as we read. We are encouraged by the picture of you sustaining us, protecting us under your wing, sending everything that we need by your gracious love and provision.

Thank you Lord that your goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life. I can never out-run you and you never move on away from me. As I look at this passage today, teach me what it is to be so wrapped up in you, so adoring of you that I miss what else is going on round about me. That being about your business and in your house is what matters to me just as it matters to you.

As we share this time together, Lord, I confess those ways that I have strayed and sinned this week. When my words, thought and actions have not matched your expectations. Thank you for your forgiveness that now surrounds and supports me.

Lord, I continue in prayer with the words Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven
hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever. Amen



Our reading is from Luke 2:41-52 where Jesus is at the Temple

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.

⁴³ After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.

⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.



Our next hymn was written in 2005 and we sing to the tune of "Be thou my vision". 1 John 4:16 says, "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them."

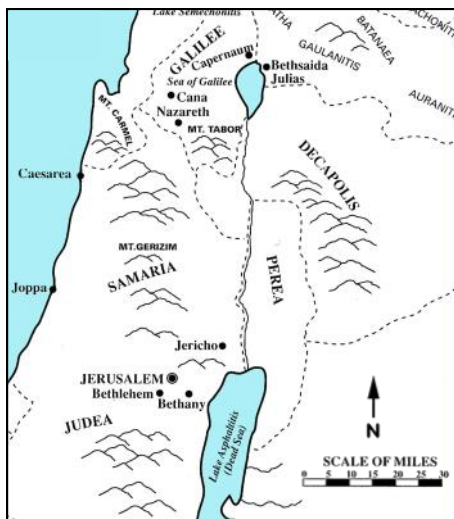
Love is the touch of intangible joy;
love is the force that no fear can destroy;
love is the goodness we gladly applaud:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the lilt in a lingering voice;
Love is the hope that can make us rejoice;
love is the cure for the frightened and flawed:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the light in the tunnel of pain;
love is the will to be whole once again;
love is the trust of a friend on the road:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the Maker, and Spirit, and Son;
Love is the kingdom their will has begun;
love is the pathway the saints all have trod:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Words & Music © Alison M. Robertson



This is a route that Mary and Joseph would have been very familiar with.

Last Sunday we joined Mary as she went to visit Elizabeth “in the hill country of Judea” just south of Jerusalem. Having gone back north after John was born, she and Joseph then have to make a similar journey a few weeks or months later to Bethlehem and to Jerusalem where Jesus is presented at the temple aged 8 days. (Luke 2:22-38)

With the family now settled back in Nazareth, Jesus grows up and at the age of 12, just like Jewish boys today at their Bar Mizpah, he would have entered the adult world and sat with the men in the synagogue rather than with the women and children.

So he fulfils every Jew's ambition and goes back to Jerusalem for the annual Passover feast; something that will have so much more significance for him (and for us) when he dies.

Perhaps his new status as a man confused Mary and Joseph as each thought he would be travelling with the other as part of that peer group. One way or another, they lost him for a day's travel, took a second day to travel back and still took a third day before they thought to look at the temple.

There he was engaged in great discussion, asking and answering questions with the Jewish leaders. There he was, hidden in plain sight and “about this Father's business.”

We'll read in two week's time of Luke's “careful investigation” as he starts his gospel; it could only have been from Mary that he got this account yet it hardly shows her as a perfect parent. Nor the Jewish leaders as perfect leaders. Only Jesus comes out of this in a good light as he continues to be obedient to both his earthly family (v 51) and his heavenly father (v49).

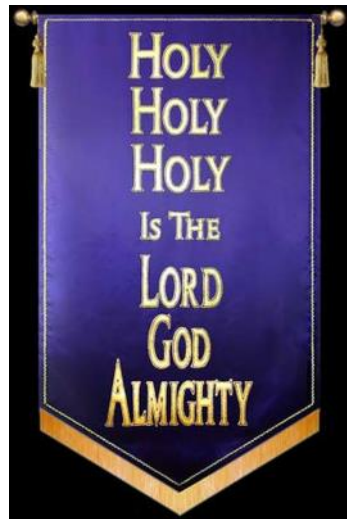
Luke's summary of Jesus childhood shows the fantastic balance we all need: Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.(v52) Are we neglecting any of those areas?

Many people find Jesus, but not everyone. How hard are we looking?

We don't earn the favour of God by taking time to worship him, but we put ourselves in the place to enjoy it and experience it.

Let's do that with this hymn that celebrates one of his defining qualities— his holiness.

Holy, holy, holy!
Lord God almighty!
early in the morning
our song shall rise to thee.
holy, holy, holy,
merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons,
blessed Trinity!



Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
God ever living through eternity.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
all thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea:
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Words: Reginald Heber, Music: John Bacchus Dykes © Public Domain

**So Jesus returned
to Nazareth with
them and He was
obedient to them**



**And Jesus grew in wisdom
and stature, and in favour
with God and man. Luke 2:52**

We take time to pray from our passage for what is on our hearts.

Lord we thank you for the families we have grown up in, those we have raised and cared for. Those communities of family or neighbourhood that we have been and are part of. Lord those missing shared experiences have been one of our great sorrows over this pandemic. The outings, the memories, the journeys, the mistakes. Thank you for the memories that we hold us to people

Thank you for ways that we have grown in our faith, our understanding and our experience of you. Those defining moments and those voyages of discovery. That you for those who have accompanied us encouraging and enabling our relationship with you to grow and mature. Those who have asked questions of us; those who have answered our questions.

Lord we consider those things that make us anxious and bring them to you. Those people who we care most about. Those circumstances that are vexing, distracting and concerning us. Those people or things that we have lost sight of; those we have kept looking for and those we find it hard to look for.

Father we bring those things to you that we treasure, just as Mary treasured things in her heart. Those things that bring us joy we share them with you. Those people who we value, you hold dear too.

We read and hear so much about well being. We pray for those tasked at a national level of balancing our freedom and responsibility for growth in physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.

We pray for how we invest in and guard those ourselves, our family, our friends and our colleagues.

Help us to get the balance right and to encourage others to do the same through modelling Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.

Every year, Mary and Joseph used to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the great feast of the Passover. When Jesus was 12 years old, they went as usual. But when they set off back home, Jesus stayed in Jerusalem without his parents realising. They thought that he was there somewhere among the large group of people with whom they were travelling. At the end of the first day's journey, they went to find him among their friends and relatives. When they discovered that Jesus wasn't there, they went back, a whole day's journey, to Jerusalem.

It was three days later when they found Jesus, talking with teachers in the Temple, and asking them questions. All who heard Jesus were amazed at how clever he was and how he was able to think. His parents were astonished, but so relieved to find him. 'How could you do this to us?' they asked.

Jesus looked at them in surprise. 'Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?' he asked.



They didn't understand what he meant. He returned to Nazareth with them, where he grew both in size and in wisdom.

Our final hymn must be one of the shortest of the older hymns in our church hymnbook, but don't let its size fool you. It still packs a punch mixing a call to world wide praise on the back of a personal relationship with My God and King!

Let all the world in every corner sing, "My God and King!"

The heavens are not too high, his praise may thither fly;
the earth is not too low, his praises there may grow.

Let all the world in every corner sing, "My God and King!"

Let all the world in every corner sing, "My God and King!"

The church with psalms must shout: no door can keep them out.

but, above all, the heart must bear the longest part.

Let all the world in every corner sing, "My God and King!"

Words: George Herbert, Public Domain

**Now go into all the joys and sorrows of the year ahead,
with your hand in the hand of God.**

**And may the blessing of the Holy Lord God Almighty,
the Father , the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with you and rest on you this day
and throughout the year ahead. Amen.**



I said to the man who stood
at the gate of the year.
"Give me a light that I may
tread safely into the unknown."
And he replied:
"Go into the darkness
and put your hand
into the hand of God.
That shall be to you
better than light
and safer than a known way."

Minnie Louise Haskins

Intimations

Mairi will be on holiday for two weeks after our services today. Speak to your elder in the first instance and with the Session Clerk and we will deal with any matters which crop up while Mairi is away.

Please watch the Church noticeboard and the website for possible changes to our Services in line with any new restrictions.

Sunday 2nd January is the first Sunday of a New Year and the service times between Ardoch and Blackford swap once again. They now become:

Ardoch Worship Service (livestreamed on both websites)

11:30am

Blackford Worship Service 10:00am

Members of the Ardoch Kirk Session will conduct worship on Sunday 2nd January and Gordon Roy will conduct the Service on 9th January 2022.

Articles for The Link should be with Gordon Roy by Wednesday 5th January.

Some worship opportunities on the BBC this weekend

7:30am BBC Radio Scotland New every Sunday Act of worship with Bob Fyffe, former General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

8:10am BBC Radio 4 Sunday Worship The Revd Lucy Winkett leads a Christmas Gospel Celebration with Mel Giedroyc reading favourites for Boxing Day, and all those Christmas tunes you love - sung with a Gospel beat by Soul Sanctuary Gospel Choir.

1:15pm BBC 1 Songs of Praise Claire McCollum meets the ever-popular Irish singer Daniel O'Donnell as he shares his journey of faith and reveals some of his favourite hymns and carols.

Ardoch Parish Church, CCLI Licence Numbers:

8326, 709991, 2287040, 1028468

Blackford Parish Church, CCLI Licence Number: 880762

Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139
Blackford Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC005594

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