

# Sunday Morning Resources

## Sunday 29 December 2024 - The First Sunday of Christmas

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

I Samuel 2. 18-20 and 26; Psalm 148 [or 148. 7-14]; Colossians 3. 12-17; Luke 2. 41-52

### **Homily**

**Today's homily has been written by the Revd Peter Leech, Director of Mission and Ministry**

Some people may hear today's Gospel reading and wonder how on earth Mary and Joseph could have lost Jesus. How irresponsible of them. Why on earth weren't they paying more attention to Jesus and where he had got to?

But I have some sympathy for them. It was busy, they were surrounded by family and friends as they began the journey home. Perhaps both of them thought that Jesus was with the other one – my wife and I have experienced that in a busy shopping centre when our eldest son was young, only to find that neither of us had him and he had gone wondering off on his own! And anyone who has had a child in their care wonder off and get lost will understand the panic that sets in as you begin to search. You look everywhere, calling the child's name, asking others if they have seen them, desperately trying to remember what they were wearing that day so that you can describe them.

And we all share in Mary and Joseph's relief when eventually they find Jesus. We understand the indignation that we 'hear' in Mary's voice as she questions why Jesus had treated them so badly.

This reading has some different elements for us to notice and wonder about.

As Mary and Joseph searched, we recognise that we live in a society that is searching, but sometimes they do not even realise what they are searching for. Searching to fill an emptiness can lead some people to turn to comforts that are short lived or harmful. In my mind, I wonder how many people who were travelling with Mary and Joseph helped to point them in the right direction: "I think I saw him back there...", "He was headed that way..." "Have you tried looking in the temple?"

I wonder how we can help others in their searching, helping to point them in the right direction? We are called to be fellow pilgrims, to accompany one another in our searching, to be willing to share of our experience when we are asked "Have you seen him? Have you seen Jesus?"

Mary and Joseph found him in the temple. The finding means an encounter. I wonder how we can help ensure that our churches can be places of real encounter. Where people who are searching can go and then find Christ. How do we help people on that journey, helping

people recognise Jesus. Sometimes our buildings themselves draw people into that encounter. Sometimes it's the stories we share about how we have encountered Jesus. Sometimes it is in the silence and the stillness when we are drawn into the presence of Christ. Sometimes it's that warm welcome, that gentle invitation and that friendly accompaniment that draw people into the presence of Jesus.

Right at the end of the passage today, we read that Mary pondered these things in her heart. I love that word 'ponder'. Mary didn't understand everything that she was seeing or hearing, but she thought about it, returned to the scenes in her heart and mind, rested with it, carried it with her. Pondering to me means that gentle questioning and searching, wondering what the meaning is, thinking things through in order to find meaning. It's much deeper than just 'thinking' or learning, but pondering is about allowing it to resonate within us.

As we begin to turn our minds to a new year, I wonder if we can be people who 'ponder' and take time to allow ourselves to question and search. Can we be people who wonder in order to find meaning? Pondering is not a fast thing, it takes time and is something that is deliberate. There is much about the Christian faith that does not always immediately make sense, but I wonder if we allow ourselves to ponder, we may experience a fresh encounter with Christ and see more of God revealed.

### ***Ways to Engage all Generations***

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt when couldn't find Jesus?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt when they found Jesus?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

### ***Suggested intercessions***

For those who are searching in our world, those who have lost their way,  
Jesus, saviour of the world,  
**Hear our prayer**

For those who are fearful and anxious,  
Jesus, saviour of the world,  
**Hear our prayer**

For those who look to the church for hope, peace and safety  
Jesus, saviour of the world,  
**Hear our prayer**

For those who we are accompanying on their journey  
Jesus, saviour of the world,  
**Hear our prayer**

For those who are weary, tired and pained,  
Jesus, saviour of the world,  
**Hear our prayer**

For those who are nearing the end of their earthly journey  
Jesus, saviour of the world,  
**Hear our prayer**

### ***Suggested hymns/songs***

Open my eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus

Guide me O thy great redeemer

See ye first the kingdom of God

Heart of worship

### **Activities to accompany the service:**

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@ lectionary resource)