

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Years A, B, and C - Christmas 2, Text: Luke 2:40-52
Year C - Christmas 1, Text: Luke 2:41-52

Luke 2:40-52

This section of Luke focuses on an incident that took place in Jesus' youth. It is unique in the canonical Gospel narratives. It presents Jesus as a faithful Jewish boy, raised by Joseph and Mary in the traditions of Israel, and observing what the Law required at that time in relation to observing Passover. With this episode, the infancy narratives end just as they began — in the setting of the Jerusalem Temple.

Verses 2:41-42: The events outlined parallel those in the presentation narrative (Luke 2:22-35): a journey to the Temple; a manifestation; Mary's sorrows; return to Nazareth; a reference to growth.

A number of Lucan themes surface: the need for Jesus to go up to Jerusalem; the contrast between the Israel of the past and the new Israel; Jesus the prophet — whose message is closely connected with His divine Person. Although at one time the Jewish Law required every adult male to be present in Jerusalem for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:16), later those who lived at a distance were expected to attend only the Passover celebration. Some pilgrims left after two days, while others remained for the solemn assembly seven days later. Mary, being a woman, was not legally required to go up to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. Perhaps she chose to do so because of her piety.

Verse 2:43: When the "Galilee group" begins to return to their homes, Jesus (without his parents' knowledge) chooses to stay in Jerusalem — possibly because of the "magnetic" attraction of the Temple. It seems a little strange that Joseph and Mary do not know that He is not among their returning community. Apparently they assume that He will be somewhere within their possibly large group of relatives and friends.

Verses 2:44-45: However, after traveling for a day, they begin looking for Jesus. Because they do not find Jesus, they return to Jerusalem to search for Him there.

Verse 2:46: They eventually find Jesus — after three

days of separation. Without a doubt, they suffer some emotional turmoil during these days. Perhaps the stress foreshadows what Mary would endure during Jesus' time on the cross and in the tomb — a three-day period when she would not expect to see her Son alive again.

Eventually, Joseph and Mary find Jesus in the Temple at the center of a group of teachers who form a circle around this Teacher par excellence — even though He is only twelve years old! Jesus not only listens to them; He asks them questions. The theme of Jesus teaching in the Temple is referred to numerous times in John's Gospel (see John 5:16ff; chs. 7-8; 10:22ff). Even so, there comes the day when Jesus' attack on the Temple system would cost Him His life (see Luke 19:45-48 and Jeremiah 7, 26, and 36).

Verse 2:47: Those who listened to Jesus in the Temple "were amazed (*a strong term denoting supernatural manifestation*) at his understanding and his answers." Here, note also 19:47, 48 — and the different responses of the priests and the lay people.

Verse 2:48: Mary's words point to an understandable anxious pain in her heart.

Verse 2:49: Here we read Jesus' first recorded words in Luke's Gospel — words that reflect the first recorded words of His mother (Luke 1). They reflect His total dedication to knowing and doing His Father's will. Although His words, "I must be in my Father's house" can also be translated, "I must be about My Father's business," Luke's focus on Temple themes favors the first translation. For twelve years, Jesus had called Joseph His "father" as does Mary also in v. 48. Both Mary and Joseph would have been puzzled when Jesus used the term in a new way — applying the term to His heavenly Father.

Verse 2:50: That Mary and Joseph do not understand is surprising, considering the preceding nativity events and the visit of the angel Gabriel.

Verses 2:51-52: These verses contain Luke's last reference (albeit indirectly) to Joseph: Jesus "was obedient to them." Naturally, Mary was challenged to give a lot of thought throughout her life to the identity of the Child to whom she had given birth.