



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

### Christmas 2 (A) January 4, 2026

**RCL:** Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 84 or 84:1-8; Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a; **Luke 2:41-52**

#### Opening Prayer |

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

#### Context |

Today's narrative is unique to the Gospel of Luke, and it offers us the rare opportunity to consider Jesus's childhood. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus has been presented in the temple in Jerusalem by his earthly parents shortly after his birth. It was customary in ancient Israel, according to practices of Judaism, for the first-born male in every family to be brought to the temple for purification and to return regularly for religious instruction. As faithful Jews, Mary and Joseph did the same with Jesus.

We also hear two separate prophecies ascribed to Jesus in the preceding verses of this chapter. First, a man called Simeon presents his song of praise, calling Jesus a "light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:32). The second prophecy comes from an elderly woman, Anna. She prophesies that the child Jesus will be the one who brings redemption—or liberation as some scholars claim—to Jerusalem (Luke 2:38).

The narrative of Luke's Gospel intentionally reiterates God's relationship with the people of Israel throughout history and emphasizes the continuation of that relationship through Jesus the Son. A child, equally divine and human, will be brought up among the Jewish people, and ultimately bring salvation to all.

Fast forward about twelve years from Jesus' birth: this passage picks up with a seemingly regular child, with regular parents, faithfully living in community and following the customs outlined by God's law. Readers of the text are meant to hold in juxtaposition the awe-inspiring, larger-than-life claims of a divine Savior with the narrative of a mother and father doing what they can to raise their child. But at this point, do they truly understand who he is? Do readers two thousand years later?

#### Theological Reflection |

This week in the church year, we continue our celebration of Jesus's birth, welcoming God Incarnate in our world. Luke 2:41-52 draws us into the theme of Jesus's fully divine and fully human nature. Whether the other characters in the narrative understand it or not, Jesus says out loud that he is in his Father's house: the temple of God (Luke 2:49). In this moment he reveals the truth in that candid way that only a pre-teen can: He is the Son of God!

However, no one seems to get it. The rabbis in the temple are certainly impressed with Jesus's questions and thoughtful responses, but it is doubtful they suspect that anything more than a smarter-than-average twelve-year-old is sitting in front of them. Verse 50 states that Jesus's parents certainly "did not understand what he said to them." So how does Jesus respond to their confusion? He goes home with his parents.

Readers today, as inheritors of Scripture, know this is not the end of the story. This is merely the beginning of Jesus's earthly ministry and his journey of revelation. He continues to live, work, worship, and teach among his family and community. He carries his message of salvation throughout Galilee and beyond, regardless of its reception.

But what about those among whom Jesus lived and moved, those with whom he shared his humanity directly in community? They had no way of knowing where this would all lead, or how the prophecies about Jesus would play out. What did it mean for Jesus to be with them, especially if they never understood his true nature while he lived and walked among them?

Consider the final verse of this passage: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor" (Luke 2:52). The author of Luke has something to say here about Jesus's own formation and development as he grows up. Jesus chooses to humble himself and participate in community with those around him. He learns and grows just as a human child would, while also inviting others to share in his divine life with him. Through Jesus, the Son, God the Father reaches humanity in a new way. Perhaps Jesus could have manifested the gift of salvation all on his own, but the reality is he did not. Instead, he revealed it through relationships with those he met throughout his life and ministry. And he continues to reveal it to us, in the promise of eternal life, as Christ our Savior.

At the heart of this passage in Luke is the reminder that our own salvation is revealed to us over and over again, throughout our lives, as we engage with Scripture and experience Jesus's teachings in the everyday. As we live, work, worship, and learn in community, seeking to share in Christ's divinity as beloved humans, we draw closer in relationship to the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### Reflection Questions |

- What does it mean *for you* for Jesus your Savior to share in humanity with you?
- In what ways has God's plan of salvation been revealed to you in your life? What is still unclear to you?
- Reflect on your own childhood. How did others help you to increase in wisdom as you grew up?
- How is your family and/or current community forming you to recognize glimpses of divine life?

### Faith in Practice |

This week, try to view the Good News of Jesus through the lens of a child. Have a conversation with a child in your life about their faith or simply observe your faith community's engagement with children's formation this week. See what you can learn from them and their perspective, as well as what you can offer as a teacher. Pray with them and for them, asking God to grant them the strength and wisdom needed to follow Jesus's example in all aspects of life.

**Paige Trivett** (*she/her*) is a Senior Seminarian at Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, TX and a Candidate for Holy Orders with the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. She has past experience working in leadership for her diocese's summer camp ministry and has served as a mentor in the Education for Ministry program. Paige's current ministry interests include multicultural parish ministry and hospital chaplaincy.



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