



## “On the Fifth Day of Christmas”

First Sunday after Christmas  
Saturday & Sunday, December 29–30, 2018  
All Services  
The Reverend Elizabeth E. Frey  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Luke 2:41-52

When I was in elementary school, the last day before the holiday vacation the whole school would gather for an assembly. The chorus would sing, and the orchestra and band would play. Our teachers would do silly skits. And the whole school would sing "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Each grade had an assigned portion of the song. It would get loud in the all-purpose room because we weren't really singing. It was more like shouting and I loved every moment of it. Hundreds of children – excited because it was almost Christmas – shouting at the top of their lungs... "and a partridge in a pear tree!"

This song tells us that the Christmas season isn't over yet. Here we are gathered on the fifth day of Christmas. But it still feels like we are in holiday no-man's-land. Maybe you've seen the tweets on Twitter and Facebook posts that joke that this time of year is awkward? No one knows what day it is because so many people take extended vacations between the holidays. Some people call it the longest Sunday ever.

Or maybe, you have already started cleaning up. That's why the day after Christmas is called Boxing Day in the UK, a whole day for cleaning up after Christmas. Today kind of feels like we are at a juncture, we are at a turning point. Our story for today follows that theme.

It is a transitional story in the life of Jesus. Only in Luke's Gospel do we have a story of Jesus at this age; this is the only story we have about Jesus – not the baby and not the adult. This story takes us from the story of Jesus as an infant into Jesus' adult ministry as an itinerant preacher and healer.

What we have here is kid Jesus, pre-adolescent Jesus. Jesus is in that special transitional time in his life. Here – let's be real – we have God as a kid! I mean, come on! Jesus' response to his mother when she tells him that they have been worried trying to find him is so pre-teen: "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Whoa, Jesus. If I talked to my parents like that, I'd be in trouble. Parents, I am sure you've heard responses like this before. Kids, I know you've all turned on the 'tude with your parents.

That's what I see here. I see young Jesus for all that he is. On the fourth Sunday of Advent, Pastor Brock preached on how God has fused with us, taking on our form from embryo to infant. Here again is God fusing with us, even as a pre-teen boy. He is God,

but yes, he is also a human. A human who happens to be 12 years old. I'm going to say it again. God was 12 once. God went through puberty. God got mouthy with his parents. God was a human kid.

In today's story, Jesus goes missing after a Passover trip to Jerusalem. In our world today, some of us might be appalled to hear that a parent lost their child on a long trip from home. And maybe some of us aren't surprised because kids wander off sometimes. I know I did as a kid, and maybe you did too?

Nazareth and Jerusalem are 65 miles apart, and Mary, Joseph, and Jesus walked with a large group to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. This large group is made up of people that Mary and Joseph know well and trust. The group leaves when the festival is over, but Jesus is left behind. Think *Home Alone*, but instead of being left at home like Kevin was, Jesus is left in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph go looking everywhere for Jesus and after three days of searching, the worried parents find him in the temple among all the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. We are told that everyone was amazed by him. Everyone was amazed by him because he was a 12-year-old kid. A smart, inquisitive 12-year-old kid.

Do you remember being 12? Do you remember what it was like to be a kid? In many ways, being a kid today is the same as it was for us who are now adults. But, let's be real. In many ways, being a kid today is so different. What is like being a kid today? What is great about being kid today? What is hard about being a kid today? Think about church as a kid? What is church like for kids?

Today's story tells us that kids and youth have something to offer us, to teach us. And standing up here today, I want every kid, every young person to hear me say that your voice matters, you have something to share with this church, you have gifts and talents, passions and skills. I want you to ask questions and to have doubts! Everything about you matters and I want you to know that you can, and you should share all that you are with this community because you matter to us.

Today's story tells us that we should be listening to the young people around us. If we really listened, what would our kids tell us? If we really listened, what would our kids tell us? Here are a few things that were offered up when I asked that question this week:

- Put down your phone.
- They have real fears and anxieties about their world. These things may seem "silly" to adults, but these things are real and truly scary for kids.
- Take an interest in their interests. Ask questions, be willing to try something new. Take it from me. It's amazing to see a little boy's face light up when you ask him about his Pokémon cards.

Now I'm going to ask that question again. Really think about it: if we really listened, what would our kids tell us? Because at the end of the day, kids and young people need to know that we value them. We value their voices. We value everything that they are. We want them here.

Many of you have heard my testimony about why I care so deeply about the children and young people of our congregation and of this church. My own brother – who was raised in the same household, taught the same values and lessons, heard the same Bible stories – views the church negatively because adults in the church showed him that he wasn't welcome, who he was wasn't welcome. He was spoken to in unkind ways, criticized as opposed to lifted up. Now as an adult, church is a negative space for him; his childhood experience colors his adult perception. It is for that reason that I choose to speak with love and genuine interest to the young people of this church. And it is for that reason that I ask all of you to join me in this important task of making sure our young people know how much we love and value them!

Today's story tells us that God became flesh. Yes, God was a baby in the manger. Yes, God was that amazing teacher and healer. But God was also a 12-year-old boy. God was a kid. God values every human being; God values you for all that you are. We all have something to offer to God and to God's church. We are never too young or too old to serve God. That's the beautiful thing about God's church. God has a place for us, no matter who we are. No matter how old we are. We are all welcome here.

Amen.

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