

Call to worship

'I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD"' (Psalm 122:1).

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.**

Song: There's a time

<https://youtu.be/wQkOKWw08xA>

THERE'S A TIME to laugh

And a time to cry;

There's a time to mourn

And a time to shout for joy.

There's a time to gather in

And a time to give away;

For a season we may sow in tears,

Longing for the harvest day.

But it's always the time to worship You,

And it's always the time

To give our thanks to You.

We will praise Your name,

Jesus, faithful and true,

'Cause it's always the time to worship You,

Always the time.

There's a time for peace

And a time for war;

There's a time to rend

And a time to mend what's torn.

There's a time to fight for good

And a time for love's embrace;

For a season we may sacrifice

For the sake of brighter days.

But it's always the time to worship You,

And it's always the time

To give our thanks to You.

We will praise Your name,

Jesus, faithful and true,

'Cause it's always the time to worship You,

Always the time.

There are many things in these troubled times
that can fill us with distress,
But when our eyes are on You, Jesus,
Then our hearts remain at rest. X2

But it's always the time to worship You,

And it's always the time

To give our thanks to You.

We will praise Your name,

Jesus, faithful and true,

'Cause it's always the time to worship You,

Always the time.

Opening prayer and confession

Gracious Lord, humble Saviour, we come with praise on our lips and love in our hearts. You are holy and just, faithful and true. Glory to your holy name.

We confess that we have not lived according to your holy ways of justice and love. We confess our own sins and the sins of our nation.

Have mercy on us, O God, in your constant love; in the fullness of your mercy blot out our offences. Wash away all our guilt, and cleanse us from our sin. Forgive our nation for turning its back on you and your ways.

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore to all who truly repent this is his gracious word: 'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Song: God of grace, amazing wonder

https://youtu.be/6crNdn2_4E

God of grace amazing wonder

Irresistible and free

Oh the miracle of mercy

Jesus reaches down to me

God of grace I stand in wonder

As my God restores my soul

His own blood has paid my ransom

Awesome cost to make me whole

God of grace who loved and knew me
Long before the world began
Sent my Saviour down from heaven
Perfect God and perfect man
God of grace I trust in Jesus
I'm accepted as His own
Everyday new grace sustains me
As I lean on Him alone

God of grace I stand astounded
Cleansed forgiven and secure
All my fears are now confounded
And my hope is ever sure
God of grace now crowned in glory
Where one day I'll see Your face
And forever I'll adore You
In Your everlasting grace

Reading: Luke 2:41-52 (GNB)

⁴¹ Every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. ⁴² When Jesus was twelve years old, they went to the festival as usual. ⁴³ When the festival was over, they started back home, but the boy Jesus stayed in Jerusalem. His parents did not know this; ⁴⁴ they thought that he was with the group, so they travelled a whole day and then started looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ They did not find him, so they went back to Jerusalem looking for him. ⁴⁶ On the third day they found him in the Temple, sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions. ⁴⁷ All who heard him were amazed at his intelligent answers. ⁴⁸ His parents were astonished when they saw him, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you."

⁴⁹ He answered them, "Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand his answer.

⁵¹ So Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² Jesus

grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and people.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Reflection: Growing in Grace

This is the last of the stories told by Luke about Jesus as a child. Last week we saw him presented at the temple as an infant. Now he is 12 years old, just a year before he is welcomed into the synagogue as a man.

If you have had the experience of losing your child while shopping or at another point, you'll know what Mary and Joseph went through when they realised Jesus was missing. You'll have experienced the raised voices as you try and locate your child, the raised heartbeat as you contemplate your child being truly lost, and the sheer elation and possibly anger when you finally find your child. All this is there in this passage.

But first a little background on the occasion of this story. 'Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover' (v41). It was mandatory for all Jewish men aged thirteen and above to attend the three great Jewish festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-17; 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16). It was not a requirement for women, but here we see Joseph and Mary attending the festival along with their 12-year-old son, which testifies to Mary's deep devotion. This was a family event. The word in v44 for 'company' was used to describe a travelling party or caravan of people. This large number would have been useful when going through the hostile region of Samaria. It also provided a sense of camaraderie along the way.

It was likely that this was not Jesus' first trip to the holy city, as 'Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover' (v41), but it was significant as in another year's time Jesus would officially become a 'son of the commandment', a full member of the synagogue. But now Jesus would have seen the city jostling with people, merchants selling their wares, and would have experienced the excitement of a major

festival. The week would have flown by for the young lad, his mind absorbed by the Passover and the temple and the Torah. He was so absorbed that 'after the feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem' (v43).

Some might ask how come Mary and Joseph did not know Jesus wasn't with them? I've already mentioned the large caravan of people that Joseph, Mary and Jesus were with. Imagine a large family gathering of all your relatives at the seaside. Children wanting ice-creams, teenagers fed up because they had to be there, parents trying to keep an eye out for the little ones. And then you all make your way back to the hotel or caravan park, but your pre-teen is still down at the beach fascinated by the Punch and Judy or whatever. When travelling en masse in ancient Jewish society children often joined with other children and other families, perhaps with cousins or friends or both. Jesus hadn't given them reason to worry up to this point. We also have to remember here that Jesus was a fully human 12 year old boy, and he learned just as we do. He had to learn about every part of life, including thinking of others. And he was capable of unknowingly causing his parents anxiety concerning his whereabouts.

How might you have felt if you had been Mary and Joseph? Worried sick, I imagine. Imagine losing God's Son! When they realised their son wasn't with them Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem. So, it took three days before they found him, three days! Of course Mary and Joseph had gone a day before they realised their son wasn't with them, and then a further day returning to Jerusalem, and then a third day locating their son. In fact in our reading it says in v46 'On the third day they found him in the temple...' I wonder whether Luke wants us to see more than this. Ask yourself, where else in the story of Jesus does it refer to the 'third day'?

So, Jesus was found eventually in the temple, sitting discussing the Law of the Lord with the teachers. Luke tells us that all who heard Jesus were amazed at his intelligent answers. His

understanding at such a young age was extraordinary. Jesus parents, who were not from a highly educated background, were also 'astonished' when they saw him (v48). But they were also hurt by Jesus actions. "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you." This is the normal reaction of any parent relieved to find a lost child but angry that they had disappeared.

Here Jesus answer are his first recorded words. "Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" Even at this young age, Jesus referred to God as his Father, the temple as his Father's house. Luke again is letting us into the unique relationship of Jesus with God. Even before he became a 'son of the commandment' at 13, Jesus had come to understand something of his unique relationship with God. Here he is in his Father's house, later on he would be about his Father's business.

To grasp the radical nature of Jesus' words here in Luke 2 and the growing self-understanding of Jesus, we need to understand that in the 39 books of the Old Testament, God is only referred to as 'Father' fourteen times, and even then quite impersonally. In those fourteen times 'Father' is used in reference to the nation, not to individuals. God was called Abraham's father, but Abraham didn't call God his father. But Jesus at 12 grasps something no-one before him had grasped. More than 60 times the gospels record Jesus calling God 'Father.' In these first recorded words of Jesus we see his growing awareness of who he is. And what is more, this awareness was announced in the Jerusalem temple, in the place which was the very heart of Israel's faith. What is the point Luke is making? Jesus is God's Son! God is his Father! In the year before entering adulthood, Jesus knew who he was, and that realisation would become evident to the whole world eighteen years later.

Mary and Joseph didn't understand all this (v50). Despite her great faith and humility it would take Mary years to fully comprehend all this. For now all she wanted was obedience from her son. And that's what happened. 'So Jesus went back with

them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart' (v51). What was the result of this obedience? 'Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and people' (v52). The word translated 'favour' is the Greek word '*charis*' meaning grace. Jesus was graced in his relationship with God the Father and graced in his relationships with people. Grace characterised his vertical and horizontal relationships.

The way for us to grow in grace with God and people is an obedient spirit, a willing submission to God. Paul writes in Romans 12:1 about us being living sacrifices, and when we sacrifice ourselves for God's glory, his grace is upon us. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, 'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Ephesians 5:21). This brings us into favour, into grace, with each other. But just as much, when we submit ourselves to serving a lost world for the advancement of the gospel and the glory of Christ, we walk in God's grace, as Jesus demonstrated. Submission is the key to grace and favour with heaven and earth. **Being obedient and submissive comes out of knowing who we are.** Jesus understood this at 12 years old. He knew who he was in relation to God and that awareness showed in submissiveness to God his Father and his earthly parents.

So I conclude asking you, do you know who you are? If so, will you submit yourself to God and his plan for you? If you do so, you will be walking in grace and will grow in the grace of God.

Prayers of Intercession

God our Father, we thank and praise you, for you love us with an everlasting love and sent your Son to be our Saviour and to show us your grace. Help us to grow in your grace, being willing to submit to your purposes and plans.

Father God
Hear us and help us

God our Father, we pray for parents who carry the responsibility of bringing up children, especially for lone parents, and especially during lockdown.

Be with parents struggling to juggle childcare and work, parents struggling to make ends meet. Grant your grace to them.

Father God
Hear us and help us

God our Father, we pray for children growing up in unusual times, having to learn at home rather than in school. Be with children struggling with home life, especially for young carers.

Father God
Hear us and help us

God our Father, we pray for the wider world, in all its present troubles. We pray for Myanmar, that democracy would be restored, that the elected government would be released and that peace and justice would prevail.

Father God
Hear us and help us

God our Father, we pray for those who are persecuted for their faith. May their steadfastness and love be an example to their persecutors. Lord, give us the same courage to speak for you and witness to your grace.

Father God
Hear us and help us

Finally God our Father, we pray for those we love but see no longer. We pray for Mike and Jan as they travel to Mike's mother's funeral this week. Be close to them and their family and pour upon them the riches of your grace.

Father God
Hear us and help us

All these things we pray in the name of Christ our King. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

**Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are
yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Song: Behold the Lamb

<https://youtu.be/ACHPwx7EGQA>

Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away,
Slain for us: and we remember:
The promise made that all who come in faith
Find forgiveness at the cross.
So we share in this Bread of life,
And we drink of His sacrifice,
As a sign of our bonds of peace
Around the table of the King.

The body of our Saviour, Jesus Christ,
Torn for you: eat and remember
The wounds that heal, the death that brings us
life, paid the price to make us one.
So we share in this Bread of Life,
And we drink of His sacrifice
As a sign of our bonds of love
Around the table of the King.

The blood that cleanses every stain of sin,
Shed for you: drink and remember
He drained death's cup that all may enter in
To receive the life of God.
So we share in this Bread of Life,
And we drink of His sacrifice,
As a sign of our bonds of grace
Around the table of the King.

And so with thankfulness and faith
We rise to respond: and to remember
Our call to follow in the steps of Christ
As His body here on earth.
As we share in His suffering,
We proclaim: Christ will come again!
And we'll join in the feast of heaven
Around the table of the King.

Holy Communion

We read in Scripture that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' After supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant of my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.'

**As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

Therefore, gracious God, with this bread and this cup we remember that our Lord offered his life for us. Believing the witness of his resurrection and ascension, we look for his coming in glory, and our sharing in his great and promised feast.

Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit, that these gifts of bread and wine may be for us the body and blood of Christ and that we may live to your praise and glory with all your saints in light.

Join our prayers and the prayers of all your people on earth and in heaven with the intercession of Christ, our great high priest, **through whom, with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all worship and honour are yours, almighty God and Father, for ever and ever. Amen.**

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ. **Christ is the Bread of life.**

The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ. **Christ is the true Vine.**

The Body of Christ broken for you.
The Blood of Christ shed for you.

Prayer after Communion

We praise you, God, for the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation which you give for the life of the world. With this food for our journey bring us with your saints to the feast of your glory. Amen.

Song: God of grace and God of glory

<https://youtu.be/u9rWrw3XB08>

God of grace and God of glory,
on thy people pour thy power.
Crown thine ancient church's story,
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us,
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

Cure thy children's warring madness;
bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore.
Let the search for thy salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving thee whom we adore,
serving thee whom we adore.

Closing prayer and blessing

Gracious Lord, as we go, teach us to walk in your
grace so that we may listen to your Spirit and listen
to those in pain, that we may be transformed with
your unending love for the lost, the lonely and the
broken; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

And now may the blessing of God Almighty, the
Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you
and all whom you love, now and for evermore.
Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.