

# Finding Jesus

Advent 2025 – The Songs of Advent (CGS#5) – Luke 2:39-52

**INTRODUCTION:** This coming Sunday, we will finish our Advent series in the Gospel of Luke. Over the course of these five weeks, we have looked at the four “songs of Advent” in Luke (Mary’s song, Zechariah’s song, the Angelic song, and Simeon’s song). These songs were responsive praise for God as he invited the lowly and the humble into his story and plan of redemption through the arrival of the long-promised Messiah. In our fifth and final week, we won’t look at a song, but a unique moment in the life of Jesus.

The Gospel accounts primarily look at the last three years of Jesus’ life, his public ministry, death, and resurrection. And even then, the Gospel accounts really focus on the last year of Jesus’ life and ministry. So while Matthew and Luke give us the primary birth accounts, it is only Luke’s Gospel where we get a glimpse into the childhood of Jesus. And even then, it is a very short and curious passage. When we read it, Luke forces us to wrestle with what it means that Jesus is both fully God and fully human. Let’s grab a quick overview of this moment in Jesus’ life.

Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem, just like they had done every single year. Why were they in Jerusalem? Passover. This journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem would have taken them anywhere from a week to two weeks of walking. This wasn’t a casual trip; it was a journey of devotion. On this particular trip, Jesus was left behind, and by the time Joseph and Mary realized it, they were a day or two into the journey home. So they frantically go back to Jerusalem and look for Jesus, and eventually, they find him! But, he isn’t where they expected him to be. He is in the Temple with the religious experts, talking and asking questions. When we read it, it leaves us trying to sort it all out... Jesus is fully human and growing (but sinless) and fully God, but is somehow not fully relying on his divinity. Here is how Grant Osborne sums up this moment: “The incident in Jerusalem (vv. 41–52) typifies Jesus’ adolescence and shows how prepared he was for his mission and ministry that were yet to come. It also demonstrates how difficult it is to fully comprehend Jesus, even for his parents. If anyone should have known, it would be Mary. But she is blindsided, and Luke wants us to identify with her and learn to submit our minds as well as our hearts to Jesus and the Spirit. Even at age twelve, he amazed the learned rabbis of his day. We must listen to him and follow his wisdom every bit as much as Mary and Joseph did.”<sup>1</sup>

Ok, so there is something amazing, wonderful, and mysterious about the dual natures of Jesus in this section, but don’t overlook the devout faithfulness of his earthly parents. They lived their lives with regular devotion, and that is remarkable. Every year, they go to Jerusalem for Passover. Imagine all of the conversations with Jesus as he is growing, just like any other child (remember Luke tells us that he grew). I wonder how those conversations, the trips to Jerusalem, his hearing the Scriptures read aloud, and Joseph’s prayers at the weekly Sabbath meal all helped Jesus (in his humanity) learn and grow. We can’t overlook the regular faithfulness of Joseph and Mary by overemphasizing Jesus’ divinity. God gave his only begotten Son to Joseph and Mary for a reason, and I am convinced that their regular faithfulness was a significant reason. In some beautiful and mysterious way, the ordinary faithfulness of Joseph and Mary helped Jesus grow and strengthen his dependence on God for his upcoming earthly ministry. We’re not Jesus, but ordinary faithfulness is a powerful thing in our lives as well. **Ordinary faithfulness grows into dependence on God.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 85.

**GETTING STARTED** – As you begin your group time, take time to answer this question together: How do you think that you would have reacted to finding Jesus if you were in Joseph and Mary’s position?

**IN THE WORD** – Let’s dig back into the passage. It is important to strengthen our muscles in reading God’s Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God’s Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage out loud to the group. Then, follow the simple OPA method below:

**O - Observe:** Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

**P - Principles:** From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

**A - Apply:** Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God’s Word. Remember, we believe that God’s Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live every day. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

**Note:** Another way to approach your time together is to talk through the following questions about the passage we are studying this week.

1. What did you hear God’s Spirit say to you through the passage this week? How does it encourage you? How does it sharpen you?
2. How have you seen God at work in your life this week? Have you enjoyed him? Have you heard his voice and the leading of his Spirit? Big ways or small ways.
3. Over this Advent season, what have you been reminded of regarding the character and nature of God? How has this shown up in your life?
4. Over the Advent series, we have seen pictures of ordinary (humble) faithfulness and remarkable responses to God. What do you see as a pattern in these moments in Luke’s Gospel? How does ordinary faithfulness prepare us to respond to God?
5. How would you define dependence on God? In other words, how do you know that you are being dependent on God and not operating on your own strength? Also, how do you know that “dependence” hasn’t turned to complacency?
6. What is a new spiritual rhythm or discipline that you need to step into this next year? Think about Scripture, prayer, intentional rest, community, and service.