

Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts – this is the treasure in our hearts, that we have invited Christ to rule there, that we may be clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, forgiveness and love.

Luke 2:41-52:

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Some of you may remember when there was a Borders bookstore in San Rafael that is now TJ Maxx. Funny that it was called Borders, because that was where I first had the experience of losing my son. I was in the children's book section with him, he was two years old, and I glanced at the shelf for just a second or two, it seemed, and when I looked down, my son was gone. I called him, I looked through the rows of shelves, and there was a heartbreaking silence as he was nowhere to be found. I panicked. It's amazing how in an instant my mind can go to the worst possible

scenario. Fortunately, he was found by a cashier in the music section 2-3 minutes later.

Two years later, with now another now-2 year old son in tow, we were enjoying a day at La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club in San Diego, on July 4th, the most crowded day of the year there. My older son, now 4, asked me a question under the beach umbrella, and I glanced over at him, taking my eyes off the younger 2 year old for a second, and when I turned back, he was gone. We scoured the beach and waves for 15 minutes, until a beach attendant with a walkie-talkie said they had found him yards and yards down the beach, pulling a toy wagon he had confiscated from a nearby beach towel.

I am familiar with temporarily missing children.

In the gospel reading today, Jesus is twelve years old. It's amazing that just 2 days ago we celebrated his birth and now the lectionary fast-forwards twelve years. I don't know if his parents had lost him before, but I'm guessing it wasn't the first time, based on my own parenting experience, and likely, most of yours. They've gone to the Passover festival in Jerusalem, something they do every year, in a big giant caravan of friends and family members traveling the two to five day trip. The festival ends, it's time to go, and they gather together, the hundred or so of them to make the trip back to Nazareth. It's a full day before Mary and Joseph notice they haven't seen Jesus in awhile. They ask around, "Hey, how's it going... is Jesus with you guys by chance?" The passage says they did not find him, and so they traveled back to Jerusalem and found him after three days. Scholars have pointed to the significance of this time frame – that it reflects also the timing – 3 days -- between his death and resurrection. What seemed to have been lost was found.

It's fascinating to me that it took them 3 days to check the temple. Usually, you go first to where you think the missing person would likely be, right? Like in "Home Alone 2", when Kevin McAllister is lost in New York City and his mother asks a police officer for help finding him, and the officer says that would be like finding a needle in a haystack. Better to think if you were him, where would you go? And she realizes he loves Christmas trees and she rushes to Rockefeller Center, and finds him there, by the biggest Christmas tree around. Apparently, Jesus' parents didn't expect Jesus to be in the temple, sitting and gabbing with the teachers. When they find him there, Mary is distressed. The translation today says that she exclaims, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." The Greek word translated as "great anxiety," *óδυνάω* (od-oo-nah'-o) is actually defined in the concordance as tormented, suffering intense emotional pain; agony, anguish, mourning, consuming sorrow. These are definitely emotions that come with parenting.

Jesus doesn't understand why they're so upset. He asks, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I'd be in my Father's house?" which seems like a typical 12-year old response (unless we look more closely at the depth of his words.) He is

revealing himself to his parents – who he is, what he values, where his passions lay. And they don't understand him just yet. It's one of those moments of disconnect between parents and child. The teachers of the synagogue were amazed at his knowledge of spiritual things, but his parents were, understandably, focused on his physical safety.

The 3 went back to Nazareth together, I'm guessing it was a bit tense, and the passage says that Jesus was obedient to his parents, and that his mother treasured these things in her heart. Now that she had him back, now that he was home safely, she could appreciate him for who he was. She treasured him and all he had and would become. What she treasured was likely his obedience not so much to her, but to God.

There's a point in parenting when after all you've given and endured -- the sleepless nights and worrying of infancy and adolescence, the scares with health issues and the scrapes with the law, when you start to see that the effort has paid off. After all the *όδυνάω*, the torment, the suffering and anguish, there's a moment when you're finally not so exhausted and worried and you realize your child has become what God has intended, when you witness that the values you've tried to embody and instill in the child is reflected back to you. Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple every Passover, training him in the ways of their faith, and Jesus now embodies this faith.

Nicole and Bryan, by the choice you are making today to have Lillian baptized, you are guiding Lillian onto a path. You are nurturing her with your values and priorities – that you care about God, about kindness, about treating people fairly and compassionately. You are providing her with an extended local family – people who will nurture, care for, and help guide and teach her. In a moment, the congregation is going to commit to this. They are going to commit to helping you, and helping Lillian. And I think we can safely say that if she ever shows up here on her own, wanting to stay and talk awhile, that we'll text you and let you know she's here with us so you're not searching for her for days on end.

Jesus asks his parents why they were searching for him and we can ask ourselves the same question today. The good news is that Jesus can still be found if we search for him. No matter what our family looks like, no matter what it has experienced or struggles with right now, we can be confident that God is faithful and at work. The first reading today, from Colossians, says that the treasure of our lives is that we allow the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts. Let us now affirm the joy that comes from this treasure of peace in our hearts as the Webb family comes forward to receive the sacrament of Baptism.