



# My Father's work

Sunday  
29<sup>th</sup> December, 2024



## Breaking Open the Word

Prepared by

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# INTRODUCTION

Samuel 2.18-20, 26

Psalms 148\*

Colossians 3.12-17

Luke 2.41-52

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

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Introduction

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Reflection

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Discussion Questions

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Five Days of Meditation and Prayer

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Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten  
Son to take our nature upon him,  
and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin:  
Grant that we being regenerate,  
and made thy children by adoption and grace,  
may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit;  
through the same our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit,  
ever one God,  
world without end.

In his sermon, Dennis emphasises the joy of the Christmas season as a time for introspection and rediscovery of faith amidst the seasonal hustle. He reflects on the story of Mary and Joseph searching for Jesus, reminding us that, like them, we can become distracted and drift away from our spiritual journeys.

Dennis encourages the congregation to reflect on their past year, acknowledging joyful moments and challenges that can sometimes obscure our connection with Jesus. He urges everyone to consider when they last felt His presence and love.

Drawing parallels between Jesus' experience teaching in the temple at a young age and our journeys of faith, Dennis invites us to revisit the moments when we first encountered God.

He highlights the importance of inviting God into our daily lives, whether during joyful or sorrowful times and notes that the greatest gift of Christmas is God's constant presence among us.

By sharing God's love and presence with our loved ones and those in need, we enrich our own experience of Christmas.

Dennis ultimately calls for a heartfelt celebration of Jesus' birth, urging the congregation to reflect on the significance of his arrival in our lives and to seek a deeper connection with him this holiday season.

## Prayer

- Share any prayer requests you may have.
- Ask God to help us stay focused on his presence this Christmas.
- Pray for ways to invite God into our daily joy and struggles.
- Seek guidance on reconnecting with him in our spiritual journeys.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,  
your gift of life so that we, made in your image  
may become your eyes, ears, hands and voice.

Christmas is such a joyful season! It's also an excellent opportunity to take a moment for ourselves and reflect on what truly matters. Amidst all the hustle and bustle, it's easy to forget why we celebrate. Like Mary and Joseph, who once found themselves searching for Jesus in the crowd, we can also get distracted by life's challenges. So, let's embark on this journey together to rediscover him this holiday season.

As Mary and Joseph realised Jesus was missing, we, too, must acknowledge when we drift in our spiritual journeys. Christmas invites reflection on the past year and our shared experiences. We've faced joyful highs and challenges that emphasised this season's importance for family. It's easy to lose sight of Jesus during tough times. We should ask ourselves: When did I last feel His love and presence?

Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple, deeply engaged in His Father's work. While the translation we often see refers to him being in His Father's house, His response felt more like the playful challenges we frequently face from our

children as they age. But this moment was truly significant. At just twelve years old, Jesus was seen as nearing adulthood, reflecting the customs and teachings of that time.

This moment echoes a bar or bat Mitzvah. Rather than tools like hammers or chisels, He is engaged in deep discussions and profound questions with religious teachers, such as Mary and Joseph, who returned to find him—surprised and enlightened. In our journeys, we may also need to revisit where we first encountered him, highlighting the beauty of returning roots.

The work of the Father shines brightly in Jesus's name. He's so much more than just our Saviour; He's genuinely God living among us, sharing His incredible love and grace. God is always with us, even through our struggles. We must warmly invite him into our moments of joy, sorrow, and those everyday happenings. We can create a lovely habit of inviting God into our daily lives—whether before meals, during peaceful moments, or when making decisions.

Sometimes, it can be as simple as looking into the bathroom mirror as we prepare for the day. We're meant to reflect God's image into the world, a beautiful gift of grace in creation. So, as you gaze in the mirror, let it remind you of God's ever-present companionship. When you see your reflection, remember that God is always close, shining His love into our lives.

The greatest gift this Christmas isn't wrapped under a tree; it's the presence of God, who promises never to leave or forsake us. The incarnation reminds us the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us. God is present everywhere, from the highest mountain to the deepest sea. This truth is a source.

Christmas brings joy as we cherish time with loved ones and share God's love with those in need. During the twelve days of Christmas, let's prioritise quality time together and reflect God's love through our actions. A wrapped gift symbolises God's presence, inspiring everyone to find ways to share His love this season.

Christmas is so much more than lights and festivities! It's a beautiful time to reflect on the birth of Jesus, our wonderful Saviour, who is truly "God with us." Let's joyfully celebrate His arrival, rediscover His presence in our lives, and share the

incredible love He brings to everyone around us.

Today, let's immerse ourselves in the true spirit of Christmas by celebrating the incredible significance of Jesus' birth and God's comforting presence in our lives. I hope this season brings you a beautiful time of spiritual renewal and the joy of rediscovering what really matters: faith.

It's so easy to overlook Jesus in the hustle and bustle of life, especially during busy times like Christmas! The heartwarming story of Mary and Joseph searching for him illustrates this. They travelled for an entire day before realising He wasn't with them, and their thoughtful response was such a great lesson for us—they returned to the last place they had seen him.

This story resonates deeply, especially in real-life scenarios like the urgent search for a missing loved one. Consider the local case of Stefanovic's daughter, where Karl faced the heart-wrenching challenge of finding her. Many celebrities share this dread. Police and rescue teams quickly began their search, starting at the house and expanding through the neighbourhood. Later, the dog squad found her asleep in an unexpected hiding spot. Upon realising she was safe,

embarrassment turned into immense joy and gratitude.

I don't usually catch Stefanovic's show, but I follow his daughter's lead and happily snooze through it! Thankfully, for the child, this was a genuinely joyful reunion. When we look at Mary and Joseph, we can see the joy and frustration they experienced finding Jesus "attending to his Father's business." These moments remind us never to give up the search when something precious goes missing. Instead, let's retrace where we last felt that excellent connection and blessing.

When we feel distant from God, it's helpful to pause, reflect, and return to that special place where we last encountered him. It might have been during a quiet prayer, a beautiful moment in nature, or perhaps through the comforting words of Scripture. No matter where it was, God is always there, patiently waiting for us to return to him.

So, as we remember the Holy Family today, let's take a moment to reflect together: When was the last time I truly felt His presence? By starting from that place, we can beautifully reconnect with the joy and blessings He brings into our lives.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why do you think reflecting on our spiritual journeys is essential, especially during Christmas?

- The sermon emphasises that Christmas is a time for reflection and helps us to remember what truly matters in our lives.
- Can you think of a specific experience this year where you felt you drifted away from your spiritual journey?

What lessons can we learn from Mary and Joseph's experience of searching for Jesus?

- The sermon discusses how Mary and Joseph travelled and realised Jesus was missing, teaching us about reflecting on where we last felt His presence.
- Have you ever felt like you were searching for something important? How did you find your way back?

How does understanding that God is always with us impact our daily lives?

- Dennis highlights that God's presence is a source of comfort and love even during struggles.
- In what ways do you think you can better invite God into your everyday activities?

From your perspective, how does the Christmas season remind us of the importance of family and community?

- The sermon mentions that Christmas is a time to cherish relationships with loved ones and to share God's love with those in need.
- What practical ways can you show love and support to your family and friends during the holiday season?

According to scripture, what can we learn from Jesus's presence in the temple and engagement in His Father's work?

- The sermon relates Jesus's time in the temple to knowing our purpose and engaging in meaningful work.
- How can you discover and pursue your passions and interests in light of your faith this Christmas?



## Conversation Starters with younger people.

These are things you can talk about with your kids to help further the conversation about what they may have learned on Sunday.

- When do you feel closest to Jesus during Christmas?
- This relates to the idea of celebrating Jesus's presence during the holiday season and reflecting on His love.

What do you think it was like for Mary and Joseph when they couldn't find Jesus?

- This question stems from the part of the sermon discussing their journey to find him and the emotions involved.
- Why is it important to invite God into our daily lives?
- This reflects the sermon's teaching about the beauty of including God in everyday moments, both joyful and challenging.

How can we show God's love to others this Christmas?

- This is connected to the sermon's message about sharing love and caring for others during the holiday season.
- Can you think of a time when you felt far from God? What helped you reconnect?
- This ties back to the part of the sermon where it encourages reflection on past encounters with God to rekindle that relationship.

This five-day devotional will explore the sermon from this weekend in greater depth. Throughout these days, we'll explore the concept of joy during Advent, reflecting on essential scriptures and insights to enrich our anticipation and celebration of Christ's coming.



### Day 1 Luke 2:41-52

In this passage, we find Mary and Joseph experiencing a moment of panic as they realise that Jesus is missing. They kindly retrace their steps, returning to the last place they encountered Him, just as we often need to do in our spiritual journeys. This reflection highlights the importance of recognising when we drift away from God and encourages us to seek Him anew, especially during joyful times like Christmas. Searching for Jesus reminds us of the love and grace He continually offers us, even amidst our challenges. As we enter this special season, let's cherish the significance of finding time for quiet prayer and reflection, allowing ourselves to be drawn back into communion with God. In these intimate moments, He reveals His tremendous love and care for us, guiding us through joy and sorrow.

- Personal Reflection Questions:

- When did I last feel deeply connected to God?
- What distractions might be keeping me from seeking His presence?
- How can I cultivate a habit of inviting God into my daily life?

- Prayer Prompts:

- Ask God to help you recognise His presence in your life.
- Pray for the strength to seek Him when you feel distant or lost.

### Day 2 Matthew 1:23

The beautiful promise of Emmanuel, "God with us," serves as a touching reminder during the Christmas season. As we reflect on the miraculous birth of Jesus, we are warmly invited to embrace the wonderful truth that God has chosen to be among us. This season is about much more than just festivities; it's about celebrating the special relationship we can nurture with our Creator. Just as Mary and Joseph joyfully discovered Jesus engaged in His Father's work, we, too, can find Him in the little moments of our everyday lives, gently encouraging us to seek His guidance and light. During this delightful time of year, let's make the most of every chance to share God's love with those in need. Recognising God's loving presence motivates us to reflect His love through our actions, showing His grace to others in heartfelt and tangible ways.

- Personal Reflection Questions:
  - How can I better embody God's love every day?
  - What does "God with us" mean for my life right now?
  - In what ways can I serve others this Christmas season?
- Prayer Prompts:
  - Thank God for His ever-present love in your life.
  - Ask for the ability to share His love with those around you, especially during this joyous season.

### Day 3 John 1:14

The incarnation of Christ is pivotal to understanding our faith. God chose to reveal Himself to us not only as an abstract force but also as a living being who comprehends our struggles and joys. Christmas serves as an opportunity to deeply reflect on this mystery and the love God offers us through Jesus. As we celebrate, we should engage our hearts and minds in recognising the remarkable gift of God's presence among us. This season calls us to embrace God's love and share it generously with our families, communities, and those who may feel forgotten. Let your actions reflect the joy of the good news of Jesus' birth, making every moment count.

- Personal Reflection Questions:
  - In which areas of my life do I need to fully acknowledge God's presence?
  - How does understanding the incarnation transform my view of Christmas?
  - What blessings can I celebrate this season?
- Prayer Prompts:
  - Spend time thanking God for His presence in your life this Christmas.
  - Ask for eyes to see opportunities to share God's love with others.

### Day 4 Isaiah 9:6

As we reflect on the beautiful arrival of the Messiah, we remember the excellent titles given to Jesus: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Each title beautifully reveals who Jesus is and the critical roles He plays in our lives. Embrace the warmth of His counsel as you navigate through the busy holiday season—let His wisdom gently guide your choices and interactions. Jesus offers a peace that goes beyond all understanding, inviting us to find rest in Him amidst life's chaos. This

Christmas, let's focus on nurturing that peace within our hearts and sharing it with others, reminding ourselves and those around us of the true meaning of this joyous occasion.

- Personal Reflection Questions:
  - Which of Jesus' titles resonates most deeply with me this Christmas?
  - How can I spread the peace of Christ to those around me?
  - What steps can I take to seek Jesus as my Wonderful Counsellor?
- Prayer Prompts:
  - Pray for God's peace to fill your heart and home.
  - Ask for the chance to be a peacemaker in your community.

### Day 5 Philippians 4:19

As we wrap up this devotional journey, let's embrace the beautiful promise that God will supply all our needs from His limitless riches. This wonderful truth becomes even more meaningful during Christmas, a time when feelings of overwhelm can creep in. Let's not forget that the greatest gift has already been given to us: Jesus, who perfectly embodies the fullness of God's provision. By reflecting on His faithfulness, we can discover renewed hope and joy, knowing He is with us in every situation. This season is not just about receiving; it's also about extending that grace to others and sharing the abundant blessings that flow from our relationship with Him.

- Personal Reflection Questions:
  - In what unexpected ways has God shown His provision in my life?
  - What blessings can I joyfully share with others during this festive season?
  - How can I remind myself of God's provision when challenges arise?
- Prayer Prompts:
  - Thank God for His generous provision in your life.
  - Ask for guidance on how to be a blessing to others this Christmas.

# End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke (St Paul's Press)

The Worship Cloud: articles by N.T. Wright and Jane Williams

Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>



Brabarlung Totem  
This is produced on  
Gunaikurnai Land, and our  
respects are paid to the First  
Nations people everywhere.

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