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**Athelstone Uniting Church #189**

**5 3 2023**

**Text:** Luke 2:41-52 (NIV)

*Theme: **Sharing our Hearts***

*from the 'Where your heart is' series*

*(based on a resource from Illustrated Ministry)*



We are in the second week of Lent, which I have heard recently can be described as the season for spring cleaning the soul!

It is a time when we think about what practises we can take up or put down to help us in our spiritual journey.

To help in your discipleship journey during Lent, there are several resources for you to make use of on the table by the door. Those online may like to make use of the Lent Prayer calendar emailed out a few weeks ago or go to LentEvent website for their prayer guide. let me know if you'd like a copy.

I hope these resources will encourage you to think and pray about what God is calling you to do during Lent.

Next week I'll be on vocational leave, growing in my ministry skills as I serve the Assembly.

The preacher will be Trevor Phillips from Wimala Presbytery. Many of you will know Trevor as a past member of this church, a friend of Paul's and mine, and a close relative to the Drys!

Our theme for Lent is "Where your heart is". By exploring Gospel passages about those things that we hold dear to our heart, we are wondering more deeply about what kinds of treasure matter, why we store treasures, and the power these treasures have in our lives. Much of the inspiration comes from resources from Illustrated Ministry dot com.



Well, what a gift it must be, for a family, to have a community that cares for your child—to be able to trust that everybody is looking out for your treasured child. She can go to the playground down the road by herself because she passes the houses of six people she knows along the way. She could stop in if she skins her knee, or needs a drink of water.

What a gift to know if your child talks back to someone, you're going to hear about it because everybody wants to make sure he knows what it means to treat people with respect.

And what a gift it must be as a child—even if it doesn't always feel that way—to know wherever you go, people are looking out for you, encouraging you, ready to step in and offer kindness or correction or support or a glass of water, whatever's needed in the moment, because that's what it means to be a community.

That is the kind of community I experienced in my childhood, growing up in Aldgate. in the late 60s and early 70s. Aldgate back then was still a country town. Our street had lots of empty blocks and hardly any traffic. on the weekends my brother and I could roam up and down our street and play with the kids who lived down the street. Neighbours' families would give us a drink or a snack if we were hungry. They'd patch us up if we skinned a knee. They'd sort out squabbles amongst us kids. And then when it was time for dinner, our parents would call out our names and we'd all head to our own homes and tell our parents about our day's adventures.

Not everyone is lucky enough to have this as part of their world. But Mary, Joseph, and their children were. The parents set out on the journey home from Jerusalem with their community and trust Jesus is somewhere among the crowd. They trust the crowd enough to know he'll be okay: he'll be swept along in the movement, he'll be guided back if he starts to wander, he'll be fed at mealtimes, and he'll connect with them again at the end of the day's journey.

But he doesn't.

Jesus doesn't connect with them at the end of the day. They ask around, and nobody's seen him. They start to panic. His mother, who from the very beginning has held him and treasured him in her heart, now can't reach out her hands to find him. His community—the people who know his family and his home, his traditions and his tendencies, who sing his favorite song with him on the way to the temple or sit around a table with his siblings to celebrate the Sabbath—now can't identify the last time or place they saw him.

There are things even the people closest to Jesus don't know about him. First and most obviously: they do not know where he is right now. Second and most interestingly: they do not know he "must be in [his] Father's house."

Jesus seems surprised by that.

*He* knows where his heart is: there, at the temple, deep in conversation; there, at the feet of teachers, and teaching himself; there, surrounded by scrolls and scholars.

He assumes his parents know where his heart is. Hadn't he been asking lots of questions? Hadn't he been teaching them, too, and anybody in the neighborhood who would listen? Hadn't he been rising early in the morning to pray? How could they not have noticed?

Near the end of Year 6, my childhood changed a lot, when we moved from Aldgate to Banksia Park. We had moved into the suburbs. more traffic. more people.

However, we lived on a cul de sac, which was quiet enough for us to be able to ride our bikes around and around and we got to know our new neighbours who had kids similar ages to my brother and I. sometimes we would hang out at one of the neighbour's houses. Their Mum, was really cool. She would spend time with us and listen to our stories.

One day, like many other days, I remember going next door and hanging out with this family. I don't know how long I had been there but at some point I figured I should head home. As I walked down my neighbour's driveway, I saw a small crowd of people outside our house, and a police car. I quickly went down to see what was up, only to find, to my shock and surprise, that they were looking for me!

I couldn't understand why my parents were so upset and hadn't thought to look next door!

I do remember how cross they were with me – and I always made sure they knew where I was after that! It was a horrible feeling... realising how upset I had made my parents! But also not understanding why they hadn't simply come next door where.. of course I would be! I don't remember if I ever had the chance to explain why I was next door and why I enjoyed hanging out there.. in that new neighbourhood where I was feeling a little lost... I had found a safe place. It was a place I treasured in my heart.

Jesus treasured his parents, but Jesus also had another treasure. He liked to be in the temple, talking about God. He called God his "Father." At an early age, Jesus already understood his identity and the call on his life. He treasured this.

Of course, we know Jesus would spend his whole life talking about God and teaching others about God's love. But Mary and Joseph did not understand this at the time. Sometimes parents and children do not understand each other's treasures. That is okay. It happens a lot.

Jesus and his parents figured it out together. Jesus followed their directions and went home to Nazareth with them.

when they eventually arrived home, and everyone had calmed down, I wonder if Jesus had the opportunity to take his parents aside and say, "Let me tell you why I stayed behind. Let me tell you where my heart is."

If that was the case, I wonder, if their hearts might have swelled, to make room for all the ways their boy, Jesus, was growing and changing, and all the things he was teaching them?

Many parents record these moments in journals, or share them on social media, as ways of marvelling at the surprising things kids say and do – to be dragged out later at 18ths or 21sts. Mary treasured these things in her heart.

when we love each other, we take each other seriously, even if we don't understand or even sometimes agree. We listen to the things that are important to one another.

The key to sticking together, even when people do not understand one another, is Curiosity. Curiosity helps us remain open to each other, continue learning about each other, and respect each other. But it doesn't work very well unless everyone is curious. Adults need to be the ones who start because they are older with more experience. They show curiosity about their children's and grandchildren's ideas.

Children can be curious too. They can ask questions and try to learn about their parents' or grandparents' or carers' ideas.

We can expand this to a safe community like this Congregation. Across the generations we can be curious, and learn from one another by asking helpful and appropriate questions.

When everyone is curious, we learn about each other's treasures and understand one another a little bit more.

What kind of questions could we ask each other?

Relating to today's story:

Have you ever been lost or separated from a family member?

Or,

What is the last thing you were excited about?

Who in your life do you trust with your thoughts and ideas? Why?

I have printed out these questions and a few others.

You might like to make use of them over morning tea, or later at home or with friends.

I pray that both in your family, amongst your close friends, and in our church family, we can provide safe places where children can be nurtured in community...

where people look out for one another.

Where people listen to one another and are curious about what they treasure deep in their hearts.

Where everyone feels a sense of belonging and being seen.

And where everyone has the opportunity to become the unique special person they are made to be.

Amen

## **Sources:**

*Where your heart is Lenten Devotional*

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*Reflections on the heart. An illustrated lent for families.*

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