

**Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY**

5<sup>th</sup> January    Second Sunday after Christmas

**HYMNS:**    556    39    588    20

**INTROIT:**    Psalm 119:97-104

Oh, how I love Your Instruction! It is my meditation all day long.  
Your Commandments make me wiser than my enemies. For they  
are always with me.

I have had more insight than all my teachers. For Your  
Testimonies are my meditation.

I have been behaving more intelligently than the old men,  
because I have been keeping Your Directions.

I have kept my feet back from every evil path that I may keep  
Your Word.

I have not turned away from Your Decisions. For You Yourself  
have taught me.

How delicious are Your Words to my taste, sweeter than honey to  
my mouth!

Because of Your Directions I behave perceptively. Therefore, I  
hate every false path.

**COLLECT:**    O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully  
created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more  
wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever  
be alive in Him, who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus  
Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You the Holy Spirit, one  
God, now and for ever. Amen.

**READINGS**

1 Kings 3:4-15    Solomon asks for wisdom.

Ephesians 1:3-14    God chose us according to His purpose.

Luke 2:40-52    The boy Jesus at the temple.

## **1 Kings 3:4-15**

<sup>4</sup> The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices there, for that was the most important high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. <sup>5</sup> At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night. God said: “Ask Me! What shall I give you?”

<sup>6</sup> Solomon answered: “You have shown great kindness to Your servant, my father David, while he lived in Your presence in truth, in righteousness and with an upright heart toward You. You have continued to show him this great kindness and have given him a son to sit on his throne, as is so today. <sup>7</sup> Now, O LORD, my God, You have made me, Your servant, king instead of my father David, although I am only a little lad and do not know how to carry out my duties. <sup>8</sup> I, Your servant, am among Your people, whom You have chosen, a numerous people, too many to count or record. <sup>9</sup> Therefore, give me, Your servant, a mind that listens, that I may judge Your people and distinguish between good and evil! For who can judge this great people of Yours?”

<sup>10</sup> This request, which Solomon had made, pleased the LORD. <sup>11</sup> God replied to him: “Because you have asked for this, have not requested a long life for yourself, have not requested riches for yourself and have not requested the lives of your enemies but have requested understanding for yourself, to discern what is right, <sup>12</sup> look! I have done as you have asked. See! I have given you a wise and understanding mind, so that there has been no one like you before you and no one will arise like you after you.”

<sup>13</sup> Moreover, I have also given you what you have not asked for, both riches and honour, so that no other king will have been like you all your life. <sup>14</sup> If you also live according to My Ways and keep My Prescriptions and My Commandments as your father David has lived, then I shall give you a long life.”

<sup>15</sup> When Solomon woke up, he realised that it had been a dream. He went to Jerusalem, stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings. He also made a feast for all his officials.

## **Ephesians 1:3-14**

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ! <sup>4</sup> For before He made the world, His love led Him to choose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to be adopted as His own sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the good pleasure of His will. <sup>6</sup> He did this that His glorious grace, which He bestowed on us in His dearly loved Son, might be

praised. <sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, because of God's rich grace. <sup>8</sup> He caused His grace to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> when He made known to us the mystery of His will. According to His good pleasure it was His purpose in Christ <sup>10</sup> to manage everything, both in heaven and on earth, in such a way that, when the right time came, He might summarise all things in Christ. <sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance. He who carries out everything exactly as His will plans it has predestined us according to His purpose. <sup>12</sup> He did this that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might praise His glory. <sup>13</sup> When you heard the message of the truth, the Good News that you have been saved and when you became believers, you were also sealed in Him by the Holy Spirit, whom God promised. <sup>14</sup> That Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until God redeems us to be His very own, that His glory may be praised.

### **Luke 2:40-52**

<sup>40</sup> The Child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.

<sup>41</sup> Every year Jesus' parents used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover.

<sup>42</sup> When He was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. <sup>43</sup> When they had spent the days there and while they were returning, the Boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents were unaware of this. <sup>44</sup> They thought He was with the others who were travelling with them. After travelling for a day, they began to look for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

<sup>45</sup> When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem, looking for Him.

<sup>46</sup> After three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> All those who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. <sup>48</sup> When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. His mother asked Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look! Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

<sup>49</sup> He asked them, "Why have you been looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's business?"

<sup>50</sup> However, they did not understand what He said to them. <sup>51</sup> Then He went down with them, came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother kept all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup> Jesus grew wiser and taller and **increased in the approval of God and of people.**

**ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN**  
**Sermon for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas 2025**  
**Luke 2:40-52**

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

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, Luke 2:40-52: **The Child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.** <sup>41</sup> Every year Jesus' parents used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> When He was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. <sup>43</sup> When they had spent the days there, and while they were returning, the Boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents were unaware of this. <sup>44</sup> They thought He was with the others who were travelling with them. After travelling for a day, they began to look for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. <sup>45</sup> When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem, looking for Him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> All those who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. <sup>48</sup> When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. His mother asked Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look! Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

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<sup>50</sup> However, they did not understand what He said to them. <sup>51</sup> Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He was obedient to them. His mother kept all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup> Jesus grew wiser and taller and increased in the approval of God and of people.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The time between the birth of Jesus and the beginning of His early ministry is sometimes called the silent years because we aren't told all that Jesus did during that time. Luke simply reports that "**Jesus grew wiser and taller and increased in the approval of God and of people.**" Jesus was, and is, a real human being who has shared in every aspect of human life. From this, we can easily understand that Jesus grew up just like any other child, except without sin.

But from what we see happening in our Gospel today, there *is* something for us to learn. From Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, we can find a pattern for how Christian families ought to live.

The first thing for us to learn is that for parents, rearing children brings a *heavy responsibility*.

Psalms 127 reminds us that “*children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward*” (v. 3). Children are God’s gift, and Christian parents must recognise this fully. Christian parents also recognise the responsibility of rearing their children as God has commanded. It is not enough for them to train their children so that they become a credit to their parents or to themselves. No, parents must first train their children *to live to the glory of the Lord*. Proverbs 22:6 says, “*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*” Many like to point to this text as God’s guarantee that when children receive Christian training, they will never lose it or, if they do, will return to it when they are old. This verse does contain a beautiful assurance. One’s childhood training in the Bible is never entirely forgotten. It’s always there as a reminder, a corrective, and a directive on the path to heaven, but sometimes, it takes a lifetime for a wayward child to return. Sometimes, parents need to be patient with their wayward children and keep them in their prayers. The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 can bring much comfort to parents of a wayward child.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph and Mary recognised their responsibility and were also concerned about the *physical well-being of the Son* entrusted to them. This brings us to our next point.

Joseph and Mary followed God’s instructions when they took the little Babe to Egypt and later to Nazareth. They showed great concern and anxiety during the three days when Jesus was separated from them. “**They thought He was with the others who were travelling with them**” but “**After travelling for a day, they began to look for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.**”<sup>45</sup> “**When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem, looking for Him.**”<sup>46</sup> “**After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.**”

Picture Joseph and Mary in your mind during those three days. It is bad enough when a young child disappears from view when you are out shopping, but imagine a child disappearing for three days! Imagine what must have been going through the minds of Joseph and Mary. Three days is a long time to be in distress, not knowing where your child is. You can almost hear the relief in Mary’s voice when she says,

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 15:11-32

**“Son, why have You done this to us? Look! Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”** She would have been so relieved when they found Jesus.

Parents are God’s representatives on earth and thus are responsible for seeing that their children receive the basic care they need. Luther once pointed out that raising children is far *“better than pilgrimages, building churches, or whatever assortment of good works one accumulates for oneself.”* Seeing to the needs of their children is one of the highest callings of parents, and the joy that comes from this task is inexpressible.

Joseph and Mary took care of their Child, but they were even more concerned about Jesus’ *spiritual well-being*, as they were heading **“to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover.”** This leads us to our third point.

The Law of the LORD required that the men appear before Him three times a year. The women were not included in this command but often took advantage of the festival period to accompany their husbands and older sons to the capital city. Now that Jesus was twelve years old, His earthly parents followed the rule that the sons must be trained to observe all religious duties and take part in the festivals with their elders.

Joseph and Mary taught Jesus by example and precept. The Word of the Lord dwelt in their hearts. Take, for example, the child’s mother, Mary. Proof that Mary was well versed in God’s Word is found in her words when she proclaimed those wonderful words of what is known to us as the Song of Mary, or The Magnificat<sup>2</sup>, when she visited Elizabeth. Mary’s beautiful hymn of praise is cast in Old Testament terminology. Where God’s Word dwells in the heart, it must dwell richly in the homes. Therefore, we may assume that from earliest infancy, the Christ-child was under the influence of God’s Word. What an example Joseph and Mary were to Jesus, and what an example are they in this respect to Christian parents everywhere!

The Apostle Paul writes to the Colossians, *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God”* (3:16). Bible reading, family devotions, and regular church attendance are all good examples of this. Indeed, as Joseph and Mary found Jesus **“in the temple, sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions,”** so may we also, with our children, come to church and hear the Word of God spoken and expounded.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:46-55

Jesus received instruction in the Word of God, first in the home at His mother's knee, later on in the synagogue at Nazareth, and in His twelfth year when He became subject to all the requirements of the Law. Parents are commanded to teach their children, and Christian parents must be vitally concerned about the training of their children. The old Lutheran pastor and theologian, Dr. Walther, once said, "*We are no longer what we were.... The increase of secular knowledge is for many the chief thing, while the thorough instruction in God's Word is viewed as added and secondary.*" If this was true in 1870 when Walther preached this in one of his sermons, it is doubly true today. Parents have a sacred responsibility to raise their children in the faith.

At this visit to the Temple, Jesus, for the first time, spoke of God as *His Father* when He said, "**Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's business?**" Jesus found joy and delight in His visit to the Father's house.

What an example to all Christians, young and old, because we, the children of God, must also be about our Father's business - gladly hearing and learning His Word and putting the Word into practice. Although we have been speaking of parents with children, of course, not all have been blessed with the gift of marriage or having children. But being about our Father's business should give all of us great joy and delight, no matter who we are, single, married, parents or children. We shall experience a thrill with all our hearts if we learn to say, "*I must be about my Father's business.*"

So far, we have spoken about the responsibility of parents, so now, let's focus on children. Jesus, as a young boy, shows a pattern of *obedience*.

The Son of God was obedient to His human parents. After they located Him, He "**went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He was obedient to them.**" What better example do children need to obey their parents? Obedience includes honour and respect for parents in word and deed. Every day in the life of a Christian child is 'Father's Day' and 'Mother's Day.'

Finally, Jesus' development was a *natural development*.

He "**grew wiser and taller and increased in the approval of God and of people.**" Jesus went through the various stages of childhood, youth, and manhood as a true human being. Though in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet He had to begin at the bottom in order to be our perfect Substitute. With the physical and mental growth, there was a corresponding spiritual growth. This showed itself in the favour and goodwill, which He enjoyed before God and man.

All of God's children should show growth in all Christian virtues. We must ask ourselves, as parents and children, "*Have we, in many ways, neglected our duties?*"

God forbid that we get into the habit of following the way of the world and leaving our spiritual life behind.

Our only comfort can be Jesus, our Saviour, who, even as a youth of twelve years of age, atoned for our disobedience and, by His spotless life and vicarious death, has satisfied all the demands of God. May He forgive the sins of neglect on the part of parents and the many sins of our youth! In His power and by His grace, may our families, no matter how large or small, become truly God-pleasing Christian families. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Father in heaven, You have sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to show Your great love to us, and to lavish Your limitless mercy on us. We thank You for all the blessings He has brought us, especially for the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins. Open our eyes to see Your glory and truth revealed in Him. Since He is our true Wisdom, grant that we may continue to cling to Him in faith, that we may know the joy of being Your sons and daughters, and continue to have the peace of being heirs of eternal life. Renew us by Your Holy Spirit, and lead us by the light of Jesus Christ to increased knowledge and wisdom, that we may gladly walk in His steps. And if we must suffer because we are Christians, help us to face it with joy, for we bear Christ's name.

Bless Your Church, O God, and give Your people fervent faith and power. Free them from all unrighteousness, and help them to walk on holy paths. Direct their lives that they may bring honour to Your name, and show forth Your praise among all people.

Extend Your rule over all lands and nations. Give wisdom to all in authority, that the nations may be governed in peace, justice, and mercy. Give parents grace and wisdom to bring up their children to fear and honour You, that they may avoid the lies of Satan and be guided by Your truth. Comfort the sick and suffering, and give strength and compassion to all who bring help and healing to them in hospitals and homes. In all places of industry and commerce, give people a vision of Your Word and will, that all, whatever their work or position, may seek to serve You.

Be with all who travel, with all in danger of body or spirit, with all who are imprisoned, and with all who face any temptation. Grant them the joy and strength of Your presence and help.

In these and in all other things that we need, give us, O Father, Your help and mercy, for we pray in the name of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ, who with You and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



## Article: The Three Estates

We are all familiar with the two categories of **church** and **state**. We call the church and the state the ‘right’ and ‘left-hand’ kingdoms. If you can recall, Jesus also makes this distinction between these two with His famous words, “*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s*” (Matthew 22:21).

While we are somewhat familiar with the terms of church and state, we are not quite as familiar with the “three estates.”

According to Martin Luther, all human lives are ordered across these three spheres. You cannot escape these three spheres because they provide structure to all our relationships and interactions. They are how God gives, orders, and protects life! They are a part of the fabric of life.

So, what are these three estates specifically? You know two of them already—the church and the state. However, the third is the family. And so, the three hierarchies that are overseen by God are the family, the state, and the church.

At its most basic level, the family consists of parents and children (obviously, we can think of the family a bit more broadly to include grandparents, uncles, and aunts as well). And so, with parents and children, the family is where husbands, wives, and children are loved, provided for, and shown mercy. For example, when a parent goes to work to earn a living, this occurs within the estate of the family. When a parent cooks a good meal to fill a hungry stomach, this occurs within the estate of the family. When a father disciplines his son or a mother teaches her daughter, this occurs within the estate of the family. Even when a worker puts in an honest day of work for his boss, this too occurs within the estate of the family. The family is the one place where individuals—like you and me—should give and receive mercy, love, care, food, drink, housing, clothing, shoes, home, an honest day’s work, and so forth. The family is where mercy is granted and care is provided.

Secondly, the state, at its most basic level, consists of rulers and citizens (obviously, we can think of kings, queens, prime ministers, judges, senators, state officials, citizens, and taxpayers as a part of this estate as well). Now, between citizens and rulers, the state is the place where anarchy is kept at bay, order is upheld, lawlessness is punished, justice is upheld, and peace is maintained. So, for example, when a judge sends someone to gaol for a crime, this occurs within the sphere of the state. When you are picked up for speeding, this is the state keeping good order. When police are called in to keep civil rest, this is the state fulfilling its calling. The state enforces order, justice, and peace.

And finally, the church. The church, at its most basic level, consists of clergy and laity (obviously, we can think of pastors, elders, Sunday School teachers, and parishioners as a part of this estate as well). For example, when pastors preach the Word, administer the Sacraments, and parishioners receive—this is happening in the estate of the church. When you are sick in the hospital, and a fellow parishioner comes to visit you, and then a pastor comes and serves you communion, this is the estate of the church. The church is where morals and forgiveness are given.

Again, we have three separate estates, three spheres. They are different, distinct from each other, and should not be mixed, as they work to bless us in different ways. The family is about mercy and care. The state is about order and justice. The church is about morals and forgiveness.

But, as you know, life is not perfect. Families fail. Pastors fail. And the state fails. They often drop the ball, which results in one of the other estates trying to pick up the slack. Or, sometimes, one of the estates will swerve out of its lane into another estate's lane, which will bring about further confusion and conflict.

So, for example, when a family fails, sometimes the government steps into the family's sphere to try to fill the void of failing parents. The state becomes mum and dad.

And let us not let the church off the hook so easily. Pastors are often tempted to want to rule their churches and society like politicians. Pastors will get bored with the Word and Sacraments and will want to swing the sword of the state to wield power and effect immediate change.

Politicians too, instead of seeking to keep order and justice, well, they would rather pontificate from podiums about morals, as if they were pastors. Politicians love the drama of trying to be a messiah while also being a parent as well.

The point is that when the government attempts to shape the church ethically, conflict erupts. When the family stops giving mercy, love, and care to family members, the government begins to meddle in the estate of the family, and conflict erupts. And instead of pastors casting forgiveness into the ears of parishioners, when they instead swing the government's sword, well, conflict erupts.

And it is just not those who are in authority that mess this up. Too often, parishioners run to politicians to tell them what they want to hear. In other words, parishioners will not like what they hear from the church, so they will go to the state to be affirmed in things that the state has no business weighing into. And tragically, bad things will happen in the family, which will result in family members blaming the church for failures in the family, when the church is not the same estate of the family.

The point being, there are three estates. These estates are not curses. They are not against each other. They are not ways in which the Lord wishes to imprison us. But instead, God desires to bless and provide for His creation through families, the state, and the church.

Clergy in the church are called to tend, shepherd, and feed the people entrusted to their care. Politicians are called to protect, keep order, and maintain justice for their citizens, and parents are called to care for, provide for, and raise their children.

So, whether you are a parent, pastor, or prime minister, never forget that these are separate spheres—different estates with different functions. And as family members, parishioners, and citizens, remember that you belong to all three estates. Your whole life is ordered by these spheres, as the Lord God provides mercy, order, and grace to you through these estates.

## Children's Message:

In the Gospel today, we hear about a time when Jesus was twelve years old, and His parents were looking all over for Him. Mary and Joseph were returning home after celebrating a special feast in Jerusalem called the Paassover. In those days, they didn't have cars, so they had to walk. They travelled together with lots of family members. For a whole day of walking, they thought Jesus was hanging out walking with His relatives, but when they started asking their relatives if they'd seen Jesus, they realised He'd been left behind. They ran back to Jerusalem and looked all over until they finally found Him in the



Temple, which is like our church, the place where you went to hear God's Word and pray. Mary and Joseph were so happy to find Jesus, but they scolded Him for staying behind. Jesus surprised them by His answer. He said, "*Why have you been looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's business?*" You see, Jesus knew He was God's Son, and He wanted to be with His heavenly Father in His house, the Temple.

You know what? God is our heavenly Father too! Jesus died on a cross to forgive all our sins and make us His children! That's a better gift than any toy or book we got for Christmas. So it makes sense that we want to be with our heavenly Father just like Jesus did. Where would someone find you hanging out with God? Here in God's house, at church. Other times, reading your Bible or praying at home, or maybe serving God or talking about Him with others in your school or neighbourhood. These are important places for all children of God to be found. You're all here in God's house today, the best place to be! Thank You God for inviting me into Your house. May I be found regularly here, singing praises to You! Amen.

## WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

<b>12 January The Baptism of our Lord</b>	<b>19 January 2 Epiphany</b>	<b>26 January 3 Epiphany</b>
AELC Service 10.00am TMBA HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC
<b>Sunday, 12 January</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 43:1-7;	Romans 6:1-11;	Luke 3:15-22
HYMNS: 392 301 279 42 322 791		
<b>Sunday, 19 January</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 62:1-5;	1 Corinthians 12:1-11;	John 2:1-11
HYMNS: 40 45 47 (84 840) 509		
<b>Sunday, 26 January</b>		
READINGS: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10;	1 Corinthians 12:12-31a;	Luke 4:16-30
HYMNS: 272 217 785 (84 364) 267		

Next Sunday, 12 January, please bring something along for a shared lunch. Remember to place your offering in envelopes marked back to your congregation. The loose offerings will go to the Parish treasury.

On 12 January, after service, a Parish Executive meeting and a Seminary Committee meeting will be held.

### BIBLE STUDIES for JANUARY

Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup>, 10.00am Lowood.

Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 7.30pm Greenwood.

Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup>, after service at Marburg.

Friday the 31<sup>st</sup>, 7.30pm Oak/Aub at Aubigny.

(Feb 2), 8.00am at Toowoomba.