

# Sermon Transcript

## Home Alone

**Colossians 3:12-17 and Luke 2:41-52 | First Sunday of Christmas |  
December 29, 2024 | Pastor John Klawiter , preaching**

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

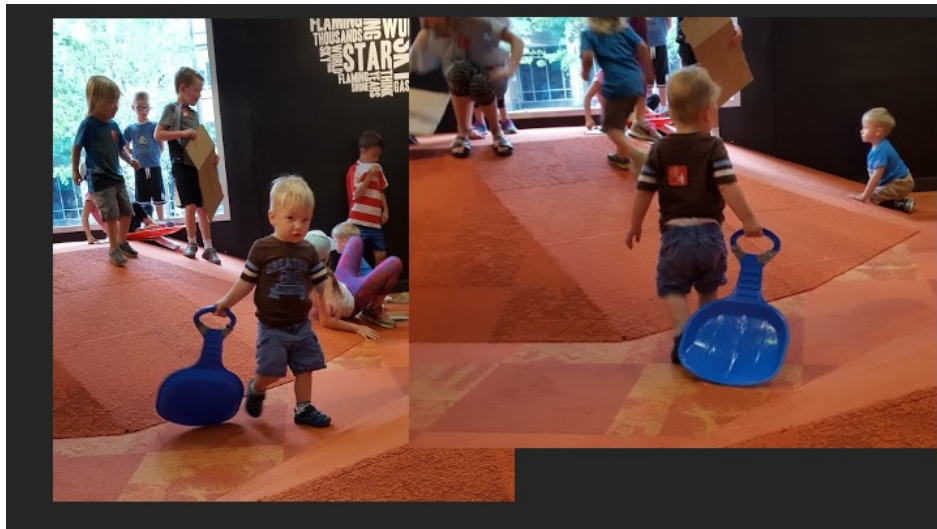
We used to go to the Children’s Museum all the time. It was a frequent ritual to go to downtown Saint Paul and let the kids explore.

Last year, we returned for the first time since 2017. Why had it been SO long?

It was the first time since the incident. And yes, I was definitely reminded of the incident... many times.

That was when Sully who was almost three, snuck away from me.

Taryn had all the other kids. My only responsibility was to keep my eyes on Sullivan.



And I failed. I lost him. He’s sneaky. I realized it quickly, too.

I searched all around the play area. No luck.

Of course Taryn came over while I was looking—I had ONE kid to watch.

I had that feeling of dread, you know—like when someone’s care and safety is entrusted to you, my mind immediately went to the worst case scenario.

Where could he be???

Finally, within a few minutes, but what felt like an eternity, Sully popped back into the same play area. He had gone to the other side of the walls and eventually found his way back to me. .

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You ever felt like that before?

And that's nothing compared to another parent who went on a LONG journey, only to discover while already far from home that something horrible had happened.

The parent, in this case a mother, realized that their son was left behind.

When that light bulb went off, the frantic journey began in order to be reunited again.

And no, I'm not talking about the Christmas classic "Home Alone".

I'm talking about Mary.

The story of Mary and Joseph losing Jesus has a few details we may have forgotten.

This is more than just misplacing their son in a museum or a bookstore. Mary and Joseph have gone an entire day's journey without setting eyes on their son.

They've just assumed he's where he's supposed to be. With family and friends.

But he's not there. It's time to retrace their steps. Back to Jerusalem.

Three days later, they find him. Three days.

That's a LONG time. I lost sight of Sully for about three minutes and I'm still reminded of this event.

Jesus is more shocked that they didn't assume he'd be in the temple—where ELSE would he be?

It's one of those curious encounters in the Bible, really. Jesus, son of the Most High—son of God—is still very much human. Jesus as a young boy is such an appropriate story in this Christmas week.

Jesus still learns from the leaders of the temple. Jesus still digests information and human interaction. He's curious about his elders and wants to participate in the life of the synagogue.

We assume Jesus comes into this world as a ready made package—spewing out Kingdom talk while in the manger. It took years of discourse and learning to cultivate the ministry that he'd eventually bring to the world.

There are a lot of assumptions that get us to this place in the story.

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First, the parents assume at the end of the festival that their son would naturally be ready to go back home and would be anxious to leave Jerusalem.

Second, Jesus assumes his parents would know that HE would want to spend as much time learning about his Father's interests and remain in the temple.

And then there's the family and friends. When Jesus goes missing, Mary and Joseph aren't alone—they have support to help find him.

Who is this traveling party? Actually, it's a Greek name—and I bet you might even know this word when I show it to you:

(SLIDE). In Luke 2 verse 44, the word translated as “group of travelers”, or “company”, is “synodia”.

Synodia... or synod. Heard of that before?

It's a word that sure has retained a lot of importance within our Lutheran church. You may be familiar with terms like Wisconsin Synod or Missouri Synod Lutherans—essentially a company of followers who hold similar beliefs with doctrine.

In our church body, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we have similar beliefs within doctrine, but we're also divided geographically into 65 synods across 9 regions.

In the Saint Paul Area Synod, this traveling party of ours has churches like Faith that essentially operate and behave independently. We make our own decisions with regards to how we worship, what missions we support, how we lead our Christian education programs.

On a Sunday, what we follow is similar to other ELCA churches in the synod, the region, the country, and around the world, but we are also unique.

We are represented by a bishop, Patricia Lull, and her staff at the synod office. This support system provides leadership in times of transition, encouragement is deepening mission, and opportunities to collaborate with other Lutherans in our synod to do more together.

Recently, the synod asked me to help create a message to send to our churches about where the Saint Paul Area Synod is at work in the world. Naturally, I hired an investigative reporter to get to the bottom of this and here's part of the Word on the Street where we get to hear directly from Bishop Patricia Lull:

## VIDEO

That's what a "synodia" does. It walks alongside and supports each other.

When Mary was a day away from Jerusalem, her synodia was there for her—assuring her and telling her that Jesus would be ok.

When Mary and Joseph find Jesus, he promises to return with them—and their synodia—to Nazareth. Jesus continues to grow in wisdom—not by staying full time in Jerusalem—but with his synodia, his people in his hometown.

You know, maybe there is another similarity to the story of the reunion of Jesus and the movie Home Alone.

While listening to Christmas carols in church, the main character Kevin encourages his neighbor, Old Man Marley to face his fear of rejection and to reach out to his family.

Kevin becomes synodia to Old Man Marley—helping him to see a truth that he couldn't see on his own.

It's Kevin (SLIDE of waving) who celebrates with Marley (SLIDE), when his reunion happens.

We, the local church, have a vital role to play in the lives of others. We are the synod. We are the group of travelers who come alongside and encourage fellow believers or curious inquirers.

We are the ones to bring words of hope and truth. We are the ones to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

This week, we have participated in "synodia"—walking together through worship services, gathering with friends and family around meals, teaching the story to our youth, lifting up hope and the promise of a new shared future.

The message we tried to hit home is pretty straightforward and simple: From Mary to Marley, (GIF) Merry Christmas everyone. Amen.