



**St Matthew's Holland Park Weekly
Bulletin 29th December 2024**

***Happy New Year! We pray that
your 2025 is a happy and
blessed one .. from Revd
Morris, Vicky and all of us at St Matt's!***



***This week's Revd. Morris' message: Can we stop, ponder and see God's hand
at work in the midst of our lives as we embark upon a new year?***

In today's Gospel, we pick up the story of Jesus's childhood after His blessing in the Temple as a baby by the Devout Simeon and Anna. We fast forward to Jesus' 12th year and the family have come to the Temple in Jerusalem for Passover in accordance with Mosaic Law. Verse 40 tells us that Jesus "*grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the Grace of God was on him.*" Jesus at this point would be considered on the threshold of manhood. At 13, He would become '*Bar Mitzvah*' - literally meaning a 'son of the commandments' i.e. fully responsible as an adult under Mosaic Law and eligible to take His place as an adult man in the Jewish community. [Since the formal Bar Mitzvah rite can only be tracked back by scholars to the 16th century, it is unclear if Jesus himself had such ceremony ... more likely He did undergo a 'coming of age ceremony' of some kind which ultimately became the Bar Mitzvah rite we know today].

A couple of points that could easily be missed in the midst of the stories' drama:

1. Jesus, when engaging in deep theological discussions with the teachers of the law in the Temple, *does so as a child of 12* - perhaps not yet even have commenced His formal Bar Mitzvah training and instruction.
2. Notice also how disturbed and worried Joseph and Mary are in this reading. Their usual Jerusalem Passover routine is shattered by the realisation that Jesus was missing. [This is almost a '*Home Alone*' story - where the resourcefulness of the child is contrasted with the frantic searching of the parents. e.g. The expression 'panic' or worry' in verse 44 literally means '*tortured*'].
3. The action takes place in the Temple - the Holiest place in Israel, the meeting place of God and Humans on earth, the place of sacrifice and reconciliation and the centre of the Faith. It is also the same place of Jesus' dedication and the prophecy of Simeon and Anna. Jesus was thus beginning to demonstrate exactly what type of Messiah He is and will become. This story also foreshadows that Jesus will in Himself become the new Temple - the place where humans can meet with and be reconciled to God through Jesus's sacrifice upon the cross [e.g. see Jesus' pronouncement in John 2:19 ff]
4. Jesus saw that His natural and normal place to be was with God. He was surprised that his parents wouldn't also understand this. Notice also that their search was for 3 days - foreshadowing the 3 Mary's search and waiting whilst Jesus was in the Tomb ahead of His resurrection and return.
5. Mary's lack of a total understanding concerning Jesus and His forthcoming ministry and role in the Divine plan of Salvation for the world. Yet, Mary in faith 'stored up' these things in her heart [just as she did the Nativity events in Luke 2:19] and pondered them.

Again, in faith and obedience, she continued simply doing what she could as a dutiful Mother to raise Jesus to be a Faithful Man - growing in stature and wisdom and loved by God and those around Him [Luke 2:32].

Well, what does this all mean for us today?

I wonder what God may be doing, or planning to do, to disturb our 'routines' this week? I wonder if right under our noses, totally unrecognised and unexpected, God is at work, revealing Himself, offering new thoughts, concepts, insights and wisdom .. and perhaps coming to us in a unconventional manner or through the words of a stranger or a child? Like Mary, can we stop long enough to capture these insights and 'ponder them in our hearts'? I wonder what these 'Divine nudges' may be being calling us to do and be in 2025? Gospel reading: Luke 2:41-52; Some

resources to dig deeper: <https://cepreaching.org/commentary/2021-12-20/luke-241-52-3/> ; <https://college.online-bible-college.com/space/lesson/files/djc060.pdf> ; [https://www.onlinejewishlearning.com/the-ultimate-guide-to-bar-bat-mitzvah-preparation/#:~:text=Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation is,to ensure a smooth celebration](https://www.onlinejewishlearning.com/the-ultimate-guide-to-bar-bat-mitzvah-preparation/#:~:text=Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation is,to ensure a smooth celebration;); <https://www.wyattgraham.com/p/how-is-jesus-the-temple>
Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service - New Year's Day Wednesday 10:30. All regular parish activities are in recess.

Today's Notices Highlights: **Video Training** available; **Calendars** available \$20; **Behind the scenes thx:** Our IT team! Sean, Tim, Andrew and Sumesh. **Readings for Next Sunday:** Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12.

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Parish website : <https://www.stmatthewshollandpark.com/>

Parish Private Facebook site : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ;

Public Site: <https://www.facebook.com/StMatthewsHollandPark> ;

Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.

STOP PRESS RAFFLE RESULTS: **First prize [pick of Rangi's bikes] - Tina and James; Second prize [Ruth and Tim's Pamper Pack] - Carol Matthews; Third Prize [Op Shop Christmas Hamper] - Imelda; Fourth Prize [Randal's Prosecco] - Dorothy. Thanks to our Prize Donors and to all those who bought tickets- we raised approx. \$500.00!]**

