

Luke 2:22-40
"The Joy of Salvation"
First Sunday after Christmas

December 26, 2021
First Ev. Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

Merry Christmas! Yes, we just celebrated Christmas yesterday, but this joy of Christmas cannot be contained to only one day. So, we are back in church to continue our celebration of the gift God has given to the world – and most importantly, to each one of us: our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ!

For many in the world today, they are taking down their Christmas decorations and pulling their Christmas tree to the curb. But the thing is, Christmas has just begun! Today is only day two of the 12 days of Christmas!

Sadly also, most people don't know they need a Savior. They only see a little baby, remember Him this time of year, and then forget about Him until it's time for another Christmas celebration. Truthfully, there are many who don't see Jesus at all at Christmas, because their Christmas celebrations center around a fat bearded man in a red suit. The vast majority of the people of the world take no thought and have no knowledge of the eternal ramifications of the birth of Jesus the Christ.

Christmas is about Jesus the Christ who is fully God and has come down from heaven to be our Savior by taking upon Himself our human flesh.

Today on this First Sunday after Christmas, we look for Jesus where He promises to be as we experience the joy of salvation with Mary and Joseph from the stable of Bethlehem to the temple in Jerusalem.

[The Joy of Simeon and Anna]

On the 40th day after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph make their way to the temple. As Jewish parents, they are keeping the Torah, but they are also fulfilling it by bringing Jesus to His true home. Instead of a lamb, His parents offer the alternative sacrifice of two turtledoves or two young pigeons.

From this, we find that Mary and Joseph are too poor to be able to afford a lamb. But, at the same time, no lamb was necessary, because here at 40 days old, Jesus is the very lamb of God brought to His temple for sacrifice.

As Mary and Joseph enter the temple while holding the baby Jesus, we meet Simeon and Anna.

Simeon was a righteous member of Israel. He is also Spirit-filled and Spirit-led as ***“it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ”*** (Luke 2:26).

Anna was also righteous as she worshipped with fasting and prayer night and day as she expected the redemption of Jerusalem and she believed in the promise of the Messiah.

Both Simeon and Anna had been waiting and longing for the Savior. When Mary and Joseph brought the Child Jesus to the temple, Simeon and Anna did not just see a little baby; they also saw their Savior. They saw the Savior of mankind. Simeon and Anna, by the power of the Holy Spirit, saw, held, and knew the great gift of God to them and to all mankind.

In joy, Simeon speaks of the universal salvation of God’s grace when he says what is known as the Nunc Dimittis:

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32).

Simeon is proclaiming that salvation is not just for the Jews but is also for the Gentiles. He is proclaiming that this Child in his arms is the Savior for all people who trust in Him. Elsewhere in Scripture, God proclaims that He ***“desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”*** (1 Timothy 2:4).

This note of universal salvation in Simeon’s song may explain why Mary and Joseph marveled at what was said about the infant Jesus. Simeon’s revelation added a new marvel to what they had heard before from the angel Gabriel and the shepherds.

As Jesus is presented at the temple, we see again how His birth is a great blessing because Jesus – true God – took on our human flesh, so that He might live perfectly under the Law and satisfy that Law for all mankind. Jesus had to live willingly and perfectly under the Law of God as a man in order to experience the Law of God in the same way that we experience it.

As He grew up, Jesus was tempted in every way that we are tempted. He is truly human. Jesus lived perfectly under the Law of God without ever sinning. Jesus was under the Law to redeem those under the Law – you and me!

[Christ Comes to Us in His Means of Grace]

Simeon, led by the Holy Spirit, knew where to find the Christ. Anna, too, knew where to look. But what about us? Where do we look to find the Christ?

On this day after Christmas Day, we like Simeon and Anna, will find Jesus in His temple – where He promises to be – in our holy places of worship, our temporary temples where Christ, the permanent Temple, has deigned graciously to meet us through His Holy Word and Sacraments.

We find Jesus through His Means of Grace.

We find Christ in His revealed and written Word, which we hear spoken here; which you read in your homes; which you carry with you in your memory, thoughts, and prayers.

We find Christ in His Holy Sacraments. Through confession and absolution, we are strengthened in our baptismal unity with Christ, and are assured once again that ***“whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned”*** (Mark 16:16). In the Lord’s Supper, our very eyes see our salvation as we hold Christ’s Body in our hands and drink His Blood for the forgiveness of our sins as He strengthens our faith in Him! It is no coincidence that immediately after this sacred feast we sing Simeon’s song.

In Christ, we find the consolation of Israel and God’s salvation as the light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to [God’s] people Israel.

We worship Christ in His temple by the power of His Spirit.

By the power of His Spirit, we embrace Him, like Simeon and Anna. The essence of true worship is gladly taking what God so graciously gives. We gladly take the Christ Child into our arms today, embracing and holding fast His precious promise of eternal life and forgiveness.

By the power of His Spirit, we praise God, like Simeon and Anna. Simeon took Jesus up in his arms, blessed God, and spoke of our salvation in Christ. Anna gave thanks to God and spoke of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel.

By the power of His Spirit, we pray to Him, and He answers our prayers. Imagine the many fervent prayers and pleadings that Simeon and Anna offered up over the years. We, too, ought to pray without ceasing!

By the power of His Spirit, we speak of Christ to others, like Simeon and Anna. Anna did not only thank God, but she also spoke of Him to all who were awaiting the redemption. Faith and knowledge of Christ cannot remain silent. Faith breaks forth and testifies in order to help others and to share its light, as Psalm 116:10 says: ***“I have believed, and so I also speak.”***

We can never separate Christmas from the pinnacle of His first Advent, Christ’s death and bodily resurrection! This is why He came! He came to undertake the great exchange by putting on our human frame to save us all from the power of sin, eternal death, and damnation by giving us forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation and all by grace through faith in Him alone!

Simeon spoke of the salvation found only in Jesus as he said to Mary, ***“Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed”*** (Luke 2:34-35).

Here, Simeon speaks of Good Friday, the very event that would cause a sword to be passed through Mary’s heart, as Mary would see her Son die nailed to a cross. But Jesus’ death on the cross is what would secure that salvation that is seen that day in the temple and that salvation that is now seen when we hear His Word and receive His forgiveness in Christ’s Body and Blood.

Simeon and Anna were so joyful that they were able to see God's salvation. We, too, receive this same joy as we hear, see, touch, and taste our salvation through the Means of Grace. Like Simeon and Anna, may we, empowered by the Holy Spirit, share with others the joy of salvation that we know in Christ Jesus! Amen.

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

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠