

Merry Christmas! Oh, Christmas is not over. Not but a long shot! Spiritually and liturgically, the season of Christmas still has another five days left to go! Of course, this is so much different from the secular world's celebration, which quickly and easily disposes of this event that is so amazingly miraculous and majestic. We're used to that. In fact, I was surprised that my go-to Christmas music stations on the radio actually kept playing Christmas music through the 26th! In the past, I remember the stations would drop Christmas music like it was a bad habit as soon as the clock struck midnight on the close of the Christmas Day!

At any rate, in the Church we believe and know that Christmas is truly a miracle to be treasured and treasured! It's the wonderful celebration of the moment of truth when God became flesh and dwelt among us. Yes, God actually became **One of** us—miracle of miracles, the very God of very God actually became a human being, and He even took on the role of a servant to boot, rather than an earthly ruler. God also became **One with** us—miracle of miracles, our God understands the entire gamut of life's experiences. And that means He's able to identify with our sorrows and joys, our fears and faults. God also became **One for** us—*again*, miracle of miracles, He came among us to save us from the curse and penalty of our sins. He paid the price for our foolish sinfulness, He walked the way of obedience according to the rigors of the Holy Law, He suffered for **our** sins, and He died. He left those sins of ours hanging on the cross, limp, and lifeless. And none of it would have happened if it weren't first of all for Christmas, the incarnation, God taking on human flesh.

But of course, there is the matter that was likely on most of our minds as we came to church this morning. And that is the brand new year which will start in about 15 ½ hours (13 hours). I have to admit that the Church calendar doesn't pay a whole lot of attention to New Year's Eve as the ringing in of a new year, but our society and basically the entire world sure does!

Speaking of the new year, I suppose it would be kind of fun to take a **peek** into the new year—if that were possible—to see what God has in store for us, for First Lutheran, His entire Christian Church, and our world.

But, on the other hand, if we did that, it would only spoil the fun if the surprises turned out to be **pleasant** ones. And what if what's ahead is turbulent? To see **that** before its time would only bring premature fear and feelings of futility. So... until tomorrow, treasure today.

In our appointed Gospel reading, we see dear old Simeon, righteous and devout. He's located right at the spot where he typically would be, working in the temple and praising God. But this particular visit to God's house was *especially* Spirit-led. That's because it had been revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit that there he would stand face-to-face with the *long-awaited Messiah*.

Now, part of Simeon was looking *back* to a whole host of yesterdays during which he and his people had longed for the day when they would be free of oppression and servitude. It had been a long, painful struggle to remain faithful to God's promise that they would be delivered from their bondage. Another part of Simeon was *looking ahead* to his own eternity. This was no morbid death wish for St. Simeon, no self-pity; he was not saying here, "I've got nothing more to live for," but rather, "All that I've lived for, and hoped for, and waited for, has been *accomplished!*"

Today! What he had **lived** for and **hoped** for and **waited** for was to **hold**, hold **up**, and hold **onto** the baby Jesus, Savior of His people and the world. Having done that, he was able to say, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, ... for my eyes have seen your salvation" (Lk 2:29-30).

Simeon's peaceful exit from this world and His entrance into the holy house of heaven would come when and as God willed. That was not Simeon's concern—for *until* that time, he would rejoice in the *moment*. Simeon knew: *Until Tomorrow, Treasure Today*.

Those words speak for themselves, don't they? Since *we* can't control or manipulate the year that awaits us, why worry about it, or even anticipate what may or may not come to pass? Instead, let's *treasure today*. Treasure the gifts with which God has surrounded us, and there are so *many*. Treasure the time that God has entrusted to us because it is precious. Treasure the people with whom God has placed us, because they are beloved. Treasure **life**, treasure **faith**, and treasure **hope**, all of which are ours this very day. How do we do that? By holding the Christ Child close to our heart; by holding **up** the Christ Child as Lord and Savior; by holding **onto** the Christ Child in simple faith and determined faithfulness, for whatever awaits us.

There's always a certain nostalgia related to New Year's Eve; it's a wonderful time for reflection, for seeing once again how God has taken us by the hand through another year and indeed, throughout our entire lifetime. We think about the ages and stages of life and how quickly the years pass and what the future holds. But...

UNTIL TOMORROW, TREASURE TODAY.

Merry Christmas and a very blessed new year to you!