

The Vigil of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord
St. Luke 2:1-14
December 24th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

She Brought Forth Her Firstborn Son

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

On this night throughout the world it has always been customary among the Christian churches that the church bells be rung at midnight to herald the birth of the Savior of the world. The bells were to represent the voices of the angels who sang out at midnight to the shepherds proclaiming the birth of the Savior. This song of the angels we also now sing. This song has remained silent among throughout the season of Advent, but now we join our voices to the voices of the angels and proclaim with them that our Savior has come; that God has taken on our flesh and become a man like us. And the bells accompany that song to represent the angels in Heaven joining our anthem of praise. The bells will ring out again when we join our voices to the voices of the angels in Heaven, who stand before the throne of God and proclaim that the Lord of Sabaoth is holy, holy, holy.

This is a night of singing. It is a night where we lift up our voices and proclaim what God has done for us through the Blessed Virgin Mary. She has brought forth her firstborn Son. Not only is He the firstborn from her womb, but He is also the Firstborn of all those who are clothed with His righteousness through the waters of Holy Baptism. The womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary brings forth our Savior. She bears the Life of the World. In Him we have life and salvation. He is born without sin.

Eve, our first mother, bore her sons Cain and Abel in sin. Cain, the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, became the first murderer. He only brought forth death. He killed his brother Abel out of jealousy and spite, because his offering to the Lord God was rejected. Eve only bears children who cause death, or who will die. But in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lord + Jesus Christ re-creates the destruction that was caused by the sin of our first parents. He takes on our flesh and purifies it in righteousness. Therefore, the Virgin Mary bears her firstborn Son, and brings life and salvation to all mankind, especially of them that believe on Him.

The womb of the Virgin Mary is a foreshadowing of the womb of holy mother Church. For, the Church brings forth her children through the waters of Holy Baptism. Through Holy Baptism we are washed and made clean of our sins and transgressions. Through Holy Baptism we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ; with His works and merits through the faith created in us by the work of the Holy Ghost through this means of grace. Therefore, just as our Lord + Jesus Christ is born pure and sinless; just as He is holy, through the waters of Holy Baptism, the Lord God heavenly Father sees only

the righteousness and purity and holiness of His Son + Jesus in us. We bear the innocence that He brings into the world through the faith granted us in the waters of Holy Baptism.

For this reason, the angels sing out with great joy. We too join our voices to the band of angels and sing the praises of Him Who came down out of Heaven so that we might have life and salvation in Him alone through faith in Him alone. We sing of what great things our Lord God has done for us out of His great love for us. The Lord of Heaven and Earth has chosen to humble Himself and become one of us, and be born of a lowly servant girl in a lowly cattle stall. This is the great work of our Lord, Who saves us who are unable to save ourselves through our own good works. He comes to do the good works for us, and suffer our punishment on the tree of the holy cross.

This message is lost, however, on our society. This world would rather hear about their own works. The focus for our world and society is always away from the Christ. The world always directs us back to our own works. They say, "Have you been bad or good?" According to our fallen sinful nature we are always bad. We are full of sin. We are not worthy of the present that has been given to us. We are not worthy of the great sacrifice that our Lord God makes for us His creation. We are not worthy of the love that He shows for us in doing this humble work of taking on our flesh. As Dr. Luther would say, "We are worthy of nothing but having dung heaped on our heads." I think I would prefer the lump of coal.

But, my dear friends, this is why we celebrate and sing tonight, for the Lord + Jesus does not leave us in this lost and fallen state, but He comes forth from the womb of the Virgin Mary to redeem us and all mankind. He comes forth from the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary to bring us back out of death and into life and immortality with Him. He comes forth from the Virgin womb to be the Firstborn of all those who are pure and holy in God's sight through faith in Him and Him alone. He comes forth from the womb of His mother to give us a reason to sing and make merry; He gives us a reason to rejoice with the angels. He gives us a reason to ring out the bells and make the whole world know that salvation has been born for them. Their redemption has drawn near. Salvation has come.

He comes to turn us away from thinking our good works accomplish salvation; that our keeping of the Law will merit our eternal reward. He comes to ground our faith firmly in Him and His works and merits. He comes so that when we sin, we may go to Him—our Throne of Grace—and have our sins covered by His sacrifice of blood on our behalf. Therefore, let the bells ring out in jubilation at the arrival of our Savior in the flesh, and let us join our voices to the song of the angels who proclaimed that God is glorified, that there is peace on Earth through our Lord + Jesus, and that His good will is done among us who believe on Him.

The song that the shepherds first heard, that we continue to sing every Lord's Day, we are told was accompanied by the glory of the Lord. According to Church tradition we are told a great light filled the sky. A light that overshadowed the shepherds so that they were sorely afraid. It was reminiscent of when the temple of Solomon was finished and a great cloud filled the temple so much that the priests were unable to perform their duties. This is how much the glory of the Lord surround those shepherds. This is how much light filled the sky.

Our candles that we light are a representation of that light that filled the sky. As we hold our candles and light up this dark space, we sing with the angels of the good things that our Lord + Jesus has done for us. What has been done for us?

The Virgin Mary wrapped her Child in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger. The Lord + Jesus wraps Himself up in bread and wine, so that we might receive His Body and Blood for the remission of our sins. He was wrapped up in swaddling cloths when He died. He laid those swaddling cloths aside, and stepped out of the grave, so that He might open up our graves, and the graves of all

those who believe on Him. Our Lord + Jesus Christ is brought forth out of the womb of the Virgin so that we might have life and salvation through Him. He is brought forth out of the womb of St. Mary, so that He might fulfill the whole Law and will of God, and suffer our punishment on the tree of the holy cross.

For this we give Him thanks! Let us lift up our voices in songs of thanksgiving and praise. Let us lift up our voices in song and confess what He has done for us, and for all mankind. Let us join our voices with the heavenly choirs—all the angels and saints in Heaven—and rejoice that our Brother has been born; that God has been born into our flesh, and we now have the gifts that He brings: forgiveness, life and salvation. *“Glory be to God on High, and on Earth peace, goodwill to men”* the Firstborn Son of God has been brought forth. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!