

The First Sunday after the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord
St. Luke 2:33-40
December 29th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Grace of God Was Upon Him

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 Almighty and Everlasting God, mercifully direct our ways, that we may walk in Thy Law, and be made to abound in good works: through Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

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

In just the first Sunday after our Lord's birth into the flesh of mankind, we are carried forward to His cross and Passion. This is the reason that our Lord comes down from Heaven to be born of a virgin mother. This is why He puts on our flesh. He comes to us—His people—to suffer and die in our place. He comes to us and bears our flesh so that in fulfilling the Law perfectly for us, He might redeem us from sin, death and the devil through His suffering and death.

This is why it is strange and out of place to celebrate the Lord's Nativity as a birthday party. He is not getting another year older. He did not come so that we could mark the time of His age on Earth. He came so that He might conquer sin, death and Satan for us and prepare for us an eternal home in Heaven; a home in which He now reigns at the right hand of God the Father in eternity with all the saints and angels surrounding His heavenly throne singing and praising His holy Name on account of the sacrifice He accomplished for us. This is why it is out of place and strange to sing, "Happy Birthday" to our Lord + Jesus. He is not just a man like us, but He is the Son of God, begotten before all worlds.

His work of redemption for us is shown us in the words of Simeon and in the sharing of the Gospel by the Prophetess Anna recorded for us in the Gospel of the Evangelist St. Luke. The things they say about this Child, forty days old, reveal for what reason He was born. The exact words of the Prophetess Anna are not recorded for us, we are only told that she "spoke of Him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." The Evangelist St. Luke records the words of Simeon. This Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel.

The fact that St. Luke records that Anna "spoke of Him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem" is telling. For what took place in Jerusalem at that time? What great building stood in this city of Jerusalem? The temple. The place where sacrifices were offered to the Lord God for the forgiveness of sins. The people of Israel would bring their offerings to the Lord God, the priests would sacrifice the offerings on behalf of the people, and in that sacrifice the person would find redemption, that is payment, for their sins.

So, when St. Luke tells us that Anna spoke of the Lord + Jesus to all those who looked for redemption, the Evangelist is referring to everyone who had come to the temple to receive redemption. That is, after all, where these events take place—in the temple. St. Luke tells us that Anna did not depart

from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers. She desired to be around the place where the Lord God offered His people redemption as much as she could. What a wonderful example for us! We should also come to this holy sanctuary and dwell here as much as possible and serve God with fastings and prayers in this place, for this is where the Lord God gives us all of His wonderful gifts: forgiveness of sins, salvation from sin, death and the devil, and eternal life with Him and all the saints. He gives us these wonderful gifts through His means of grace; His blessed preached Word and His blessed Sacraments.

This woman who dwelt in the temple daily—the place of the Lord God’s redemption—is blessed because she dwelt there, because on this day the Lord + Jesus is brought to the temple by His parents, Mary and Joseph. They are there to perform the requirement of the Law for the birth of a male child. While they are there performing this work, which we will hear more about on February 2nd, the festival of the Presentation of our Lord, an old man named Simeon takes the Child in his arms, and proclaims the reason for this Child being born. Anna being in the temple that day, gets to hear what this Child will do for her, and all the people of Israel who cling to Him in faith.

When we are in this holy place, we also benefit like Anna, for we also get to hear what good things our Lord + Jesus has done for us. We hear of how He suffered and died for our redemption. We hear of how He fulfilled the Law of God perfectly. We hear of how our sins and trespasses are not held against us, but we have been credited with the righteousness of Christ. This same righteousness that was placed upon us when we were baptized with water and the Holy Ghost. And we participate in our Lord’s great work of redemption when we come and kneel before this altar and receive His Body and Blood in bread and wine. We remember His sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross. The pastor proclaims that our sins are forgiven by God on account of the virtue of his office as called and ordained minister of the Word, and our sins are forgiven by God Himself in Heaven. This is the benefit that we have when we come to this holy house. It is the benefit that Anna received that day when she heard the words of Simeon in the temple.

Simeon tells the parents of the Lord + Jesus exactly why He was born. He was born for the falling and rising of many in Israel. The Lord + Jesus will either bring ruin or resurrection to the Israelites. And make note that this prophesy is about the people of Israel, the people who have the word of God. This is not about those outside of the faith. Many of the Israelites rejected the Lord + Jesus. They refused Him as their Savior. For this they were led into ruin. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed. Their kingdom was taken from them. And they were outcast from the promised land. These same ones, on account of their continuing refusal to acknowledge that the Lord + Jesus is the promised Messiah, will find themselves in eternal ruin in Hell.

With them many of this world who also reject the Lord + Jesus, either because they do not care to know Him, or because they purposely reject Him will also find themselves in eternal ruin. Many in this world will fall because of Him—because of their rejection of Him.

Simeon tells us, however, that many will also be raised up because of Him. Those who cling to Him in faith; cling to His works and merits; to His redemption for mankind on the tree of the holy cross, will be raised up out of the muck and mire of their sins, and will be raised up from the temptations and travails placed upon us by the devil and his angels, and we will be raised up from death on the Last Day, and will live with our Lord + Jesus for all eternity singing the eternal Liturgy of the Lamb of God in His Kingdom with the whole company of Heaven—the saints and the angels of God. The smoke of the incense will surround His throne, and the song of the whole company of Heaven will fill the earth. We will be in that the crowd singing with the other saints the songs we are learning to sing on this earth. Death will no longer have a place among us. For our Lord + Jesus will have raised up us, and all believers on Him, for the sake of His work of redemption for us on the tree of the holy cross.

A few days ago, we celebrated our Lord's Nativity. We saw our Lord's birth in the flesh, and rejoiced that the Lord God has been born as a man, like one of us. He has put on our flesh, to fulfill the Law of God perfectly for us, and suffer and die in our place on the cross. The Church moves quickly from the Lord's manger to the Lord's tomb. On Christmas, He was placed in a manger by His parents, Mary and Joseph. In a short while, He will be placed in the tomb on Good Friday, and He will burst open the door of our tombs, so that we might have life with Him forever. The Church draws us away from the sentimentality of a Baby's birth, to the purpose of His birth—His cross and Passion.

He comes to redeem us from sin, death and the devil, and Simeon and Anna remind us that He was born for dying. All those who reject Him will find eternal ruin. But all those who cling to Him in faith—who cling to His works and merits for them—will find resurrection and life. Let us like Simeon and Anna be found where our Lord + Jesus is. Let us dwell in this sanctuary and hear of our Lord's works, like Anna dwelt in the temple. May the Holy Ghost lead us to the means of grace of our Lord + Jesus Christ, even as He led Simeon into the temple that day to meet with the Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. The Lord + Jesus has come to raise you out of your sins, and give you eternal life. Cling to this promise in faith and receive the reward He won for you. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who by the mouth of Simeon didst declare that Jesus Christ is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, we beseech Thee, enlighten our hearts with true knowledge of Thy Son, that, in adversities and perils, we may not be offended in Him, but cling to Him, and rise through Him, and abide in Him, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!