

The Festival of the Circumcision of our Lord
St. Luke 2:21
January 1st, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Before He Was Conceived

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 Merciful and Eternal God, heavenly Father, Who didst cause Thy Son to endure Circumcision and to be made subject to the Law, that we might be redeemed from the curse of the Law: We beseech Thee, grant us grace to become partakers of this redemption and thus obtain eternal salvation, through the same, 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.

Every year on the first day of the secular year the Church begins with the first shedding of blood of our Lord + Jesus Christ. The Church begins the secular year with a reminder of the atonement for the sins of the whole world. We gather together as the Body of Christ and confess our sins that we have committed over the past secular year. We ask the Lord God that He would forgive our past sins; that He would remember His atonement for the sins of the whole world. We ask that He would remember not the sins of our youth nor our many transgressions, but that He would forgive them all by His grace. We ask that He would remember that His wrath was appeased by His Only-Begotten Son on the tree of the holy cross. We pray that He would remember that He poured out all of His wrath and our penalty of sin was paid for by the innocent shed Blood of His Only-Begotten Son on the tree of the holy cross. This is how the Church—we as the Body of Christ—celebrates the beginning of the secular calendar year; we remember our Lord's atonement for us on the tree of the holy cross.

In our Lord's circumcision we have our Lord's first act of the atonement for our sins; His first shedding of Blood for us poor, miserable sinners. This atonement was planned since before the foundation of the world. Even before the world was created; even before mankind was formed from the dust of the Earth, our Triune Lord God planned for our redemption from sin, death and the power of the devil. We are told by the Evangelist St. Luke that even our Lord's Name was planned before His conception. Even before He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lord and Savior was given a Name. This Name of our Lord is eternal. It is from the beginning. Even as He was begotten of the Father from before the worlds began, so has His Name existed. His Name is + "Jesus." His Name means, "Savior." For He will save His people from their sins.

Our Lord + Jesus—our Savior—has been planned to be our Savior from sins since before the world began. His Name was planned even before the angel Gabriel came to the Blessed Virgin and announced that she would be the Theotokos—the God-bearer. Even before the Holy Ghost overshadowed the Virgin Mary and conceived our Lord + Jesus in her womb, His Name was established of old. He has always been meant to be our Savior. His shedding of Blood on our behalf has always been planned. Our atonement—the payment of our sins by our Lord's death on the cross—has always been planned. Since before the worlds were created, the promise of our atonement has been promised.

This is why we can so easily place our trust and faith in this promise, for it has been promised of old. This redemption that our Lord accomplished by His shed Blood has been promised to us from of old. This is also why we gather together on this first day of the secular calendar year to celebrate the Festival of the Circumcision of our Lord, for His first shedding of Blood is a foretaste of His work of atonement on the holy cross. What this means for us poor, miserable sinners is that all the troubles with our sins and iniquities that we have experienced over the past year, have been paid for. We find forgiveness for our past sins when we trust in faith that our Lord + Jesus, our Savior, has paid the penalty of our sins by His shed Blood on the cross.

Wherever our Lord + Jesus sheds His Blood, we have atonement for our sins. Wherever He places Himself under the Law, even as He does this day by being circumcised and placing Himself under the Law of God, through His perfect obedience to the Law; through His fulfillment of the Law of God, our transgressions are covered over by His righteousness. This righteousness of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ covers over all of our sins that we committed over the past year, and they will cover over all of our sins in the coming year, too, whenever we turn to Him in contrition and faith.

Our Lord's Name has been planned before the foundation of the world. His salvation through His shed Blood has been planned before the foundation of the world. Therefore, His circumcision was planned before the foundation of the world. In order to fulfill all righteousness, our Lord + Jesus is both circumcised and baptized. He gave circumcision to Abraham and to all His descendants. All male children born, not only those in the house of Israel, but also all the children of the foreigners in their midst, were circumcised on the eighth day. The first day of the new week. Abraham circumcised all males in his household, as did his children. This was halted during the wilderness wanderings, so that we hear in the Book of Joshua that the men of Israel were all circumcised after they crossed over the Jordan River. The generation that rebelled against the Lord God was left to die in the wilderness. Upon entering the land of Canaan, a new covenant was made with the generation that was produced from that rebellious generation. All those who were born in the wilderness were circumcised—were brought into the household of the Lord God—just as they entered the Promised Land.

In being circumcised our Lord + Jesus fulfills the requirement of circumcision. Now we no longer are required to be circumcised on the eighth day like the perfidious Jews. We now possess an even greater circumcision. The Jews are circumcised with a physical circumcision. The circumcision that they still perform today is useless for it is only a physical circumcision. But the circumcision with which the Church circumcises her children is a spiritual circumcision. It is not a circumcision of the flesh, but it is a circumcision of the heart. This spiritual circumcision is Holy Baptism. Our Lord + Jesus, our Savior, fulfilled the rite of circumcision, even as he prepared the waters of Holy Baptism for us by His own baptism. In His baptism, He Who was without sin, sanctified and purified all water for use in Holy Baptism. We have been washed in the waters of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost.

This Holy Baptism—this spiritual circumcision—cleanses our hearts from all dead works and washes away the stain of all of our sin. In Holy Baptism we are clothed with the righteousness of the Christ. We are clothed with salvation by putting on the garments of our Savior. The Name that our Lord + Jesus is bestowed with today, has also been placed upon us. We bear His Name and we bear His salvation. This is why whenever we say His Name—+ Jesus—we bow our heads in honor and worship of what He has done for us. We bow our heads at His Name and give thanks that just as He is named "Savior," we too have salvation.

Through Him we not only bear His Name, but through our Holy Baptism we bear the Name of the Holy and Blessed Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We make the sign of the holy cross when we hear this Name that has been placed upon us. For our Lord God's Name placed upon us means that we have atonement for our sins. His Name placed upon us means that we believe and confess that we have forgiveness of all of our sins through the shed Blood of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

With our Lord's Name upon our forehead—with the Triune Lord God's Name upon our foreheads—we have redemption from sin, death and the power of the devil. We have redemption through our Lord + Jesus Christ's shedding of Blood on our behalf. It is through our Lord that we have our sins atoned for.

The sins of this past year have been paid for in full by our Lord's shed Blood. The sins of the coming year have been paid for by our Lord + Jesus Christ's shed Blood. Therefore, my dear children, let us hold fast to the cross of our dear Lord + Jesus Christ, for through Him—through the shedding of His Blood—we have redemption from all of our sins.

Let us also give thanks this day—this first day of the secular calendar—for our Lord + Jesus Christ's first shedding of Blood on this the eighth day—the octave—of our Lord's Nativity. He has been circumcised and has shed His Blood for you. His circumcision in the flesh is our circumcision in the flesh. His suffering and shed Blood on the tree of the holy cross is our suffering and shedding of Blood on the cross. His death and burial are our death and burial. All that He does He does for us, for this has been planned since before the foundation of the world. He does all this for us, so that just as He was raised from the dead, we too shall rise again from the dead on the Last Day. Even as He ascended into Heaven, we also will be called into our eternal home in Heaven. For He sits on the right hand of God the Father interceding for us poor, miserable sinners until the day He calls us from this vale of tears to our home in Heaven.

My dear friends, let us continue to cling to the works and merits of our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ in the coming year, even as we have done so in this past year. He has provided us with many good things in this life—many good things in this past year—nothing more grand than the forgiveness, life and salvation that He bestows upon us whenever we come into this holy house and receive His gifts given through the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of the Blessed Sacraments. In a little while, we will all gather at this altar and receive the Blood, with His Body, that was shed for our atonement from the Cup that offers us the remission of sins. In bread and wine, we will receive the remission of sins. Our Lord has commanded us to do this in remembrance of Him. In the bread and wine—the Body and Blood of our Lord + Jesus Christ—placed upon our lips we remember His atonement for us on the tree of the holy cross. Come and receive this gift that was planned before our Lord's conception, indeed from before the foundations of the world, as a gift to us that grants us remission of our sins. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O Lord God, heavenly Father, we give thanks to Thee that Thou hast made Thy dearly beloved and Only-Begotten Son obedient to the Law, that He might redeem them that were under the Law from its curse; and we beseech Thee, enlighten our hearts by the Holy Spirit that, when our conscience accuses us of sin, we may be comforted by His obedience, may walk in newness of life, and at last inherit everlasting salvation; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, 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!