

The First Sunday after the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord  
St. Luke 2:33-40  
December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Myrtle Beach, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

To All Those Who Looked for Redemption

*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 the Church's year we are moved quickly from our Lord's birth to our Lord's death. Over just the past four weeks we have been moved from our Lord's conception when the angel Gabriel appeared to the Blessed Virgin Mary and announced that the Holy Ghost would overshadow her and conceive in her our dear Lord Christ, to His Nativity in Bethlehem being wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. This is a time frame that is normally nine months; from conception to birth. We are brought from the conception of our Lord to His Nativity in a matter of weeks. Furthermore, in a matter of a few days we are brought to our Lord's presentation at the temple and the purification of the Virgin Mary. This is an event that took place forty days after the birth of a son. Indeed, we will celebrate this event again on February 2<sup>nd</sup> when we celebrate the Festival of the Presentation of our Lord, or Candlemas.

Over a few months we will be taken quickly through our Lord + Jesus Christ's life. We will see Him return to the temple as a young boy of twelve years old in a couple of weeks. We will see Him perform His first miracle at the wedding in Cana, where He turned water into wine. We will see Him transfigured before Saints Peter, James, and John on the mountain of transfiguration where our Lord + Jesus met with Moses and Elijah to discuss His pending death and resurrection from the dead. These events—our Lord's suffering and death—will also quickly be put before our eyes as we observe Holy Week and Good Friday. We will see the Man Who was a Baby only a couple of days ago, suffer and die at the hands of evil men for our redemption. He will pay the price of our ransom with His very own life on the tree of the holy cross.

Then in three days He will rise again from the dead. Assuring us that the promises made to us on account of His sacrifice for us are truly won for us. We have the sure promise that we do indeed have forgiveness for our sins. And wherever there is forgiveness of sins, there are also eternal life and salvation granted to those who cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ. So, you see my dear friends, the Church's year takes us quickly through the life of the Lord + Jesus Christ; from His birth to His death to show us the redemption that awaits all those who believe.

The Evangelist St. Luke moves just as quickly through the life our Lord + Jesus. From His Nativity St. Luke, the Evangelist, moves us quickly to His circumcision, and to His presentation at the temple.

It is significant that we find ourselves so quickly in the temple. Remember what took place daily in the temple? Sacrifices were made on behalf of those who brought their sacrifices to receive redemption from their sins. The animal paid the price of death so that the one offering might have forgiveness and life. Our Lord + Jesus is the One, True sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. By His death all the sins of the whole world have been atoned for, so that all those who cling in faith to His work of atonement have been justified, that is, made right with the Lord God.

In other words, our Lord + Jesus is the true Temple. Wherever the Lord + Jesus is found there can be found redemption, that is, a paid ransom, for one's sins. This is why the sacrifices happened in the temple. For the temple was the physical embodiment of the Lord's presence among His people. This is also why the altar of burnt offerings was placed in front of the door going into the Holy Place, which allowed the high priest to enter into the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement. He would sprinkle blood—the blood that represented his sins and the sins of the people of Israel—upon the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant represented the Lord's presence among His people. His wrath and anger over the sins of the people of Israel were appeased through the sprinkling of blood.

The ark of the covenant—the Lord God's throne of mercy for the sins of His people—stood before the altar of burnt offering to witness the sacrifices made on behalf of the people. The Lord God presence continually before the altar meant that the Lord God continually granted forgiveness to His people. When the temple was destroyed on account of the rebelliousness of the Israelites, the Lord God's presence was no longer continually present among His people. The ark of the covenant was lost or destroyed. The temple that was built after the Israelites had returned from exile in the land of Babylon did not retain the glory of the former original temple. Even King Herod's temple which was not completed until just a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and was being built at the time of the events in today's Gospel reading, did not match the glory of the original temple.

But even the original temple of King Solomon, who followed the plans of his father King David, did not possess the glory of the True Temple—our Lord + Jesus Christ. In this Baby forty days old was contained the fullness of the divine glory of the Lord God. The Lord God was dwelling with His people in this Baby. The Baby Who is both God and man was the True Temple. Therefore, the True Temple made by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost through the womb of the Virgin Mary is brought to the temple made with man's hands. The Perfect Temple is brought to the imperfect temple. The True and Only source of redemption is brought to the place where men went who looked for redemption.

The temple was the place where men had looked for redemption from their sins through the shedding of blood of bulls and goats. Now there was a new Temple—a holy and perfect Temple—where Israel, and all the Gentiles who believe on the Lord + Jesus—could find true and lasting redemption. Our redemption is not found in the temple made with hands. The redemption of the Israelites that they sought for in the temple sacrifices was only an imperfect redemption. It was not eternal and lasting forever. In our Lord + Jesus, this Baby who is only forty days old, we have an eternal and lasting redemption. All those who cling to Him in faith find a true and lasting ransom for their sins, and are justified before the Lord God.

This is why we cling in faith to the work of the Christ. In His work of fulfilling the Law of God perfectly for us, and suffering on the tree of the holy cross to win for us redemption from sin, we find the gifts that He won for us by His death on the cross. We receive true redemption. We receive forgiveness for our sins in this man + Jesus. For in Him dwells bodily the full glory of the divine majesty. He is our Temple to which we go to receive forgiveness of our sins. His death on the cross is the sacrifice that is sprinkled on the mercyseat of the throne of our Lord God. His innocent suffering and death, and His shed Blood is our redemption that wins for us life and salvation.

This altar represents the presence of the Lord + Jesus Christ among us. From this altar He hands out to us forgiveness, life and salvation. He gives us these great gifts through His Body and Blood offered up on the tree of the holy cross, which we receive in bread and wine. Therefore, my dear friends, when we come and kneel before this altar and receive upon our lips the redemption won for us by our Lord's sacrifice on the cross. We are coming into the presence of the True Temple; the True and Only place in which we can find redemption for our sinfulness.

This is why the Church's year takes us quickly from our Lord's incarnation and Nativity to His death and resurrection and ascension. For the Church desires that we never lose hope in the midst of the trials and struggles of this life. The Bride of Christ—the Church—continuously puts before our eyes the work of the Christ. She puts before our eyes the True Temple in Whom we can find true and lasting redemption from our sins. For this reason, let us continue to celebrate the Feast of our Lord's Nativity during this octave, which will be completed by our Lord's circumcision—His first shedding of blood for us poor, miserable sinners. Let us rejoice and give thanks, even as Simeon and Anna rejoice and gave thanks that the True Temple had been brought to the temple made with man's hands. This Child is the reason why we have had our sins paid for. Let us give thanks and sing His praise forever and ever. 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!*