

Midweek Advent Vespers 4
St. Luke 1:57-80
December 22nd, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Now Elizabeth's Full Time Came

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.

This week we get to hear about two births. Two baby boys are born for us this week. Today, we hear about the birth, circumcision, and naming of St. John the Baptist. This child will go before the Lord + Jesus to prepare His way. Indeed, this child, St. John the Baptist, goes before the other Baby Boy born for us this week—our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. The time of the Forerunner to the Christ has been fulfilled. This is the last text dealing with the Forerunner before we celebrate our Lord's Nativity in a few days. This season of Advent—this season of the Forerunner, St. John the Baptist—is coming to a close. The Forerunner has prepared us to meet our Lord + Jesus on the night before the Mass of the Christ. We will keep vigil—keep watch—this coming weekend for the birth of our Savior in the flesh. We celebrate the birth of two babies this week, but the birth of our Lord God into our flesh is by far the superior birth.

But the birth of the Forerunner is also important, for He points the way to our Lord + Jesus; he prepares us to meet our Lord and Savior in our flesh. Therefore, today we hear about the birth, circumcision, and naming of St. John the Baptist. What do most people do when a baby is born? The Evangelist St. Luke tells us the answer. Elizabeth, in her old age, conceived St. John, but now her full time has come and she gives birth to a baby boy—to a son. What does St. Luke, the Evangelist write concerning the response of this birth? He tells us that when all of Elizabeth's friends and relatives heard about the birth of this baby boy, they rejoiced with her.

This is what people do when babies are born; they rejoice. We rejoice along with Elizabeth, and her friends and relatives. We rejoice along with Zacharias who has had his speech taken away for more than nine months. His silence was longer than nine months because he still had to finish up his duties as a priest before he could return home, and then there was the time it took to conceive. So, Zacharias was silent for more than nine months on account of his unbelief in the promises of the Lord God told to him by the angel Gabriel. But when he declares that this baby boy's name was to be called John, his lips were loosed and he prophesied concerning this child. This was certainly a cause for rejoicing! Therefore, we join with all the characters in this narrative to rejoice at the birth of the Forerunner to the Christ.

This child will go before the Lord + Jesus. He will give the knowledge of salvation found in the Lord God alone to all the Lord's people—the people of Israel, that is, the Church. He will give all those

who hear the knowledge that forgiveness of sins is found in the Lord + Jesus—in the Messiah—the Anointed One of the Lord God. This forgiveness is our salvation. Through the pure preaching of the Word of God; through the preaching of St. John the Baptist, all men will know that salvation is found in the Lord + Jesus Who brings to us forgiveness of our sins by His death on the tree of the holy cross. St. John the Baptist will proclaim the tender mercies of the Lord God, that is, that He has chosen to come down from Heaven and visit His people Israel—His Church—in order that He might save them from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

This is why we rejoice with Elizabeth at the birth of this baby boy named John, for He points us to the Christ—to our Lord + Jesus. St. John the Baptist's birth took away the reproach from Elizabeth that she endured for being barren; a condition believed by the Jews to be a penalty for some sin committed. She would no longer be considered a sinner through the miracle of this birth. This boy took away her reproach among the people. But this child, John, would point to another Baby Boy Who would take away the reproach of all people.

This reproach that we endure is on account of our manifold sins. We are justly reproached, for we sin daily and much. We are filled with sin. We are indeed poor, miserable sinners. On account of this our enemies, the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, reproach us daily. They accuse us of our sins, and taunt and insult us daily. They do this because as our enemies they hate us. They want no good thing to happen to us. They only want to see our demise. They want to either lead us into despair over our sins, so that we cannot see the salvation found in the Lord + Jesus, the Baby Boy to be born for us in a few days. Or, they want us filled with pride and haughtiness, so that we think that we are really not that bad of people. They want us to diminish our sins, so that we think that our sins are not that terrible of a thing. In so doing our enemies get us to forget that our salvation is only found in the Lord + Jesus and His works and not in ours.

This baby boy, John, who is circumcised and named in today's text, points away from ourselves to the Christ. He points us to the Christ so that we no longer despair over our sins, for all of our sins have been paid for with blood on the tree of the holy cross. The Baby Boy that will be born for us in a few days, will grow up and having perfectly fulfilled the Law, will suffer and die in our place on the cross. He will pay for our sins with His very own Blood. This Blood we will receive with wine for the forgiveness of sins in the Lord's Suppers, where we will receive not only His Blood in the wine, but His Body which He offered in the bread. This meal gives to us forgiveness, life and salvation as we remember our Lord's sacrifice for us.

So then, St. John the Baptist will lead us out of despair by pointing us to the Christ. But he will also free us from the pride of thinking that we do not need a Savior, because we are "good little Christians." For he will preach that we need repentance. We need to daily confess our sins and believe on the Lord + Jesus for our salvation. St. John the Baptist leads us to the Person Who can rescue us from our enemies who hate us; those enemies who want to keep us in the dark—keep us in the darkness of sin and shame. This baby boy, John, points us to the One Who will lead us out of this prison house of darkness into His marvelous light.

We are led out of darkness into the light of the Church. In this Christian Church, forgiveness of sins and eternal life are constantly being preached into our ears. The Gospel that frees us from the darkness of sin and death is preached into our ears, so that we see clearly the salvation that is found in the Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone. This is truly a cause for rejoicing!

Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice this night that the Forerunner to the Christ has been born, circumcised, and named John. For he will point us to our Lord and Savior. He will point us to the other, more important, Baby Boy Whose birth we will celebrate in a few days. We have two births this week that we celebrate. We have two baby boys being born for our benefit this week. We have two

reasons for which to celebrate. One baby boy is born to point us to the other Baby Boy born for us. Let us rejoice for the Lord God of Israel has visited and redeemed His people. Our Lord God in the Person of the Son of God—our Lord + Jesus—has come down from Heaven and taken upon Himself our flesh, all so that He could redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil. What a great cause for rejoicing! For all of our sins have been paid for by Him, so that the reproach we endured on account of our manifold transgressions has been removed. He has thoroughly and utterly destroyed our enemies who hate us.

Elizabeth's full time has come to give birth to the Forerunner of the Christ. She has born for us the person who will point us to our Savior. St. John the Baptist points us to the Baby in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Day. Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice that this week we get to celebrate two births—two baby boys born for our benefit—for these births lead to our salvation in the One Who is born of the Blessed Virgin at midnight on Christmas Day. 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!