

The Festival of the Presentation of our Lord and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary
St. Luke 2:22-32
February 2nd, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Titus Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Athens, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Every Male that Openeth the Womb

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And when the days of their purification according to the Law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought Him up to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’), and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, ‘A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.’”

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.

My dear friends, in the Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve first sinned, they realized that they were both naked. They had come to know good and evil. They realized that they were the evil. They had disobeyed the Lord God’s command not to eat from the tree in the midst of the Garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By eating from this tree, they realized that the image of the Lord God with which they had been created was now corrupt. They were the evil. All that was good in them was now corrupted.

They heard the voice of the Lord walking in the cool of the day searching for them. Knowing that the Lord God was holy, and that they were now unholy, they tried to hide themselves. They tried to cover up the nakedness which they had uncovered by their transgression. So, they sowed fig leaves together to form an assemblance of clothing. This clothing was insufficient to hide their shame and sin. Sin requires a sacrifice. Sin requires a death.

When the Lord God was made fully aware of their transgression, and after He had promised them a Savior from their loins, the Lord God made clothes for Adam and Eve from the skins of animals. It is impossible to get skins from animals for clothing without killing an animal first. What this means is that the Lord God showed Adam and Eve how to atone for their sin with the death of an animal. In order for them to continue to live, a death must take place. The death of the animal would be a replacement for their death. But the death of goats and bulls did not fully appease the wrath of the Lord God for their transgression.

But through Moses, the Prophet of the Most High God, the Triune Lord God established the sacrifices for the atonement of the sins of the people of Israel. At that time, the Lord made a covenant

with the people of Israel that every male that opened up the womb of a virgin was to be holy to the Lord. The child belonged to the Lord. Fathers and mothers could redeem their child from the Lord God by the offering of sacrifices. For those who could afford it a lamb was brought for a whole burnt offering, and a young pigeon or turtledove was offered for a sin offering. The lamb would be wholly burnt up so that nothing was left but ashes. The young pigeon or turtledove for the sin offering would be partially burnt, and the rest consumed with the priest the one offering, as a sin offering; a communal offering that represented the peace that now existed between the Lord God and the one offering the sacrifice.

For those who were unable to afford a lamb of the first year for a sacrifice, the Lord God made concession that the burnt offering could be made with another young pigeon or turtledove. Two young pigeons or two turtledoves were brought, one as a burnt offering and one as a sin offering. This is why we see in the reading from the Evangelist St. Luke that St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary bring a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. We see from this that the parents of our Lord + Jesus were devout. They obeyed the Law of Moses. St. Mary's time of purification had come to an end. The total time was forty days for a male child. Seven days she would be considered impure, and then on the eighth day the child would be circumcised. Then she would remain impure for another thirty-three days.

She was then required to present herself and her child to the temple to offer the sacrifices prescribed by Moses. This was the custom for all male children who opened the womb of their mothers. All male children (and female children, whose time of purification required twice as long) were considered holy to the Lord. They were holy to the Lord, but they were also born and conceived in sin, therefore, a sacrifice had to be made to atone for the child. St. Joseph, and the mother of the Lord, St. Mary, fulfill what Moses had commanded.

There is just one problem. All of mankind is conceived and born in sin, they are corrupt from their mother's wombs. They inherited that corrupt seed from their fathers, from the original seed of Adam. All of mankind bears this original sin, this innate corruption that we inherit from our fathers, and which we pass on to our children. From this original sin flows all of our actual sins, our sins of thoughts, and words, and deeds. We commit actual sins because sin dwells within us. We fail to do the good that we ought because we are conceived and born in sin. Therefore, a sacrifice is required to atone for our sins. The Jews sacrificed lambs and goats and bulls, and turtledoves and young pigeons. We have a greater sacrifice that atones for our sins.

This is why it is odd for the parents of our Lord + Jesus to present Him to the priest in the temple and offering sacrifices to atone for His sins, because He is without sin. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost. His mother was a virgin, meaning that she did not conceive the Lord + Jesus through the natural means by which children are brought forth. In other words, her womb was intact until the birth of her perfect and holy Son. The Lord + Jesus was the only One Who has actually opened up the womb of His mother. Her womb was closed prior to His birth, because she did not know a man. Her womb was opened when the Lord + Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea forty days ago. This means that only the Lord + Jesus, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is the only One Who has opened the womb of His mother, and is therefore, the only One Who is truly holy to the Lord God.

He is the only One Who is born free from the bonds of sin. He is the only One Who does not require a sacrifice to be made to atone for His transgressions, for He is without sin and transgression. He is without iniquity and trespass. He is born perfect and holy. He is the only One born without sin. Why then the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons? Because this sacrifice points back to the original sacrifice of our Lord God in the Garden of Eden, when He showed Adam and Eve how to atone for their sins by the sacrifice of an animal by which they were clothed. And it also points forward to the One True sacrifice of this forty-day old Child Who would offer up His perfect, sinless and spotless life as a ransom for the sins of the whole world. He would be the Lamb of the Lord God which atones for the sins of the whole world. He would be the whole burnt offering, fully destroyed upon the

tree of the holy cross to fully appease the wrath of the Lord God for the original sin of Adam, and for all the sins of mankind which they have done since the fall of Adam. This sacrifice atones for all the sins ever committed, and ever will be committed.

With this death of our Lord + Jesus upon the tree of the holy cross we are clothed. Like our first parents, Adam and Eve, were clothed with the skins of animals, we are also now clothed. But unlike the skins of animals, which were imperfect sacrifices, our Lord's sacrifice fully atones for our sins. We are now clothed with His righteousness. We are given new and glorious bodies. We bear our Lord's righteousness through faith. We first put on this garment of righteousness at our Holy Baptism. We are clothed with the righteousness of the Christ, for in Holy Baptism, we are buried with Him in His death. Just as He was raised from the dead, we too, now walk in newness of life.

We continue to cloth ourselves with the Lord's righteousness whenever we hear His holy Word—hear of our redemption through His suffering and death—and cling in faith to this great promise. Therefore, wherever two or three are gathered together in the Lord's Name to receive His gifts—to hear and receive His holy Word—He is in the midst of us. He is here with us today. Preaching into our ears that He was won new garments for us by His death and resurrection. We are now clothed with His righteousness. Having been clothed with His righteousness, we can come to this altar and receive from Him the gift that strengthens and renews the faith He implanted in us by Holy Baptism and the preaching of the Gospel. We can receive from Him His true and substantial Body and Blood in bread and wine.

We begin our Divine Service by remembering the way that we entered into a fellowship with our Lord + Jesus. We begin by remembering how He clothed us with His righteousness. We end our Divine Service in the same way. For our Service ends with the *Nunc Dimittis*, the words of Simeon, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." We may now leave this place of worship with the peace that exists now between us and the Lord God. Our sins have been atoned for, we are now justified by faith in that atonement. We now have peace with the Lord God, for His wrath has been appeased by the suffering and death of His Only-Begotten and Beloved Lord + Jesus.

But this peace that now exists between us and the Lord God does not just mean that we can leave this place in peace, but that we can also leave this world in peace. We can depart in peace into the heavenly realms. The Paradise of the Garden of Eden is now restored to us. We are no longer cast out into the outer darkness of sin and shame, but our Lord + Jesus has opened up the way for us to enter into the eternal heavenly realm of Heaven. Indeed, when we gather at this altar, we get a foretaste of that heavenly realm when the whole host of the heavenly band, all the saints and angels of Heaven, join us here at this altar. We can now depart in peace, fully clothed with the Lord's righteousness, and be welcomed into the eternal, heavenly abode prepared for us by the working of our Lord and Savior, + Jesus, the Christ. Let us depart in peace, giving Him thanks and praise all the days of our lives for His great gifts. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same 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!