

The Festival of the Presentation of our Lord and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary
St. Luke 2:22-32
February 2nd, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

They Brought Him to Jerusalem

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.

When Moses completed the Tabernacle of Meeting that the Lord God had commanded and instructed him to build, the Lord God entered into the Tent of Meeting in the form of a cloud. The cloud of smoke was so thick that Moses could not enter into it. When King Solomon had completed the temple in Jerusalem, and after he had dedicated it, the Lord God once again came to dwell with His people by entering into the temple. Once again, the cloud of smoke was so thick that the priests could not enter into the temple. The Lord's glory and majesty was so great that neither Moses in at the Tabernacle of Meeting, nor the priests in the new temple of Solomon could approach the dwelling place of the Lord God.

The Tabernacle of Meeting lost its glory when the Israelites decided to treat the Ark of the Covenant as a talisman and the Philistines thoroughly defeated the Israelites and took the Ark as a spoil of war back to Philistia. The Ark of the Covenant, the mercyseat of the Lord God, the representation of His dwelling with the people of Israel, was never again returned to the Tabernacle of Meeting. The Ark of the Covenant, the Lord's throne of mercy, was placed into the temple of King Solomon, and the Lord God entered into that temple to take up His dwelling place with the people of Israel. However, on account of the continuous false worship and idolatry of the people of Israel, that temple was destroyed by Babylon, and all the furnishings, including the Ark of the Covenant, were brought into Babylon, along with the people of Israel who were exiled from their home land—the Promised Land.

Seventy years later when another temple was built by Zerubbabel, the Ark of the Covenant was not placed in the Holy Place of the temple. We are told by the Jewish historian Josephus that there was nothing in the Holy Place. Scripture records no scene for this new temple like at the time of the completion of the Tabernacle or the first temple. No cloud of smoke entered into the second temple of Zerubbabel. At the time of our Lord's birth there was a third temple built by King Herod. This temple whose construction began in 20 BC was not completed until 64 AD, six years before it was completely destroyed in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Neither Zerubbabel's nor Herod's temple has any mention of the Lord God entering into it in a cloud of smoke like the Tabernacle of Meeting or Solomon's temple.

So then, why does the Prophet Malachi in our Epistle reading for today prophesy that the "Lord,

whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight.”? To what event is the Prophet Malachi referring? Today that prophecy is fulfilled when our Lord + Jesus is brought to the temple by His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and His guardian, St. Joseph. The Lord + Jesus was brought to Jerusalem, the holy city, to the temple by His parents. Unlike at the times of the dedications of the Tabernacle of Meeting and Solomon’s temple, the Lord God does not appear in a cloud of smoke so that Moses and the priests are not able to enter into the House of the Lord God. No, this time our Lord God comes to us in a form that we all can approach and worship. The Lord God comes to us in our flesh. He comes to us as a man.

The priests and Moses were not able to enter into the House of God because of the Lord’s majesty; because He was holy and they were not. When our Lord God is brought to Jerusalem by the Blessed Virgin and her husband St. Joseph, the people of Israel could now worship their Lord without fear. This is evident in the actions of St. Simeon.

When St. Simeon entered the temple and saw the Lord + Jesus there with His parents, the Evangelist St. Luke tells us, “He took Him up in his arms.” The Lord God Who was unapproachable by the Church in the Old Testament, is now approachable by the Church of the New Testament. The Lord + Jesus has become our mediator and intercessor. He is the One Who bridges the gap between God and man by becoming the God Who is man. This is the type of Lord that we have now. This is the type of God that has been revealed to us throughout the Christmas and Epiphany seasons.

Shepherds came and worshiped Him on the night of birth as He lay wrapped up in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. Magi from the East came and worshiped Him on bended knee in the house as they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh twelve days after His birth. He sat before the teachers of the temple and asked and answered questions of them. He attended a wedding with His Apostles as He turned water into wine. He preached the Sermon on the Mount, and afterward healed a leper, and the paralyzed servant of the Roman centurion. He calmed the wind and the waves when He had slept in the boat that carried Him and His Apostles. In all these times we saw the Lord God being with and helping and having compassion upon His people.

The Lord God was brought to Jerusalem by the Virgin Mary and Joseph after they returned from Egypt when He was just forty days old. St. Simeon took Him up in His arms and looking at the Lord God being in his arms, he blessed God and sang the *Nunc Dimittis*. He could now depart in peace because he had seen and held the Lord God in his arms. He could now depart in peace because he had seen the salvation of the Lord God. He held in his arms the Savior of the world—his Savior; our Savior.

We sing the *Nunc Dimittis* at the end of every Divine Service. It is our confession that having seen our salvation in the Lord + Jesus, we can now depart in peace. Not just depart in peace to our homes and lives, but we can now depart in peace to our heavenly home, and our heavenly, eternal life. For our Lord + Jesus, Who opened the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has been born “holy to the Lord.” He is the One Who is set apart to be sinless and without sin. He is perfectly holy and without sin. He is the perfect sacrifice for us poor, miserable sinners in need of the Lord God’s grace and mercy for our sins. He atones for our sins completely on the tree of the holy cross.

Therefore, He now opens the womb of the Church that she might bear new children—those who have put on the works of the Christ, and bear His righteousness. We as children of holy mother Church, who have put on the works of the Christ, can also come and dwell with our Lord + Jesus—the Lord God Who is man—without fear or trembling over our sins. For He has paid the penalty of our sins. He has also taken upon Himself our flesh so that we may approach Him as we would our brother in Christ. Like St. Simeon, we can take Him up into our arms and bless the Lord God and sing the *Nunc Dimittis*, for on account of Him we can now depart this life in peace having our sins fully atoned for and forgiven

through the means of grace.

Let us then, my dear friends, receive the Lord + Jesus upon our tongues in His Body and Blood, and rejoice that through this gift given in bread and wine, we have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. For the Lord God has come suddenly to His temple. He has become the temple. The True Temple in which the sacrifice for sins is fulfilled once and for all. Let us take Him up into our arms through the means of grace, and bless Him by giving Him thanks for His bountiful mercy toward us. 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!