

The First Sunday after Christmas  
St. Luke 2:33-40  
December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## This Child

*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 Child, whose parents could not find a proper room in which to bring Him into the world, who was laid in a manger, and who was hunted by Herod and had to flee to Egypt is told when He is forty days old that He is destined for the fall and rising of many by a very old man called Simeon. This Child is destined for death. He is destined to atone for the sins of the whole world. But only those who believe on Him and cling to Him in faith are justified and made right with the One, True Triune God. They will rise from the dead and be given eternal life with this Child in Heaven. Those who reject this Child, however, will suffer eternal torment in Hell, on account of their unbelief and rejection of this Child. This Child—our Lord + Jesus Christ—is destined for the fall and rising of many.

This is what is said about the baby + Jesus when He is only forty days old. That was the law of the Jews that was given to them by the Lord God when they wandered in the desert after leaving Egypt. Our Lord + Jesus' parents obey that law. Having just come back from Egypt themselves they obey the law of God that was given to them. The law stated that any woman who gave birth to a boy would be considered unclean for seven days, and then on the eighth day the boy was to be circumcised (which in our liturgical calendar is tomorrow). Then she would remain in the "blood of her purification" for thirty-three days. So that, after those forty days, (seven plus thirty-three) she would need to purify herself by making atonement by either bringing a lamb as a burnt offering, and a turtledove or pigeon as a sin offering, or if a lamb could not be afforded, then two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and one for a sin offering.

This was known as the purification rite. We actually celebrate this event in our liturgical calendar. Every February 2<sup>nd</sup> we celebrate the Presentation of our Lord and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. You will find that our liturgical calendar follows closely the life of our Lord. Tomorrow, being the eighth day after our Lord's birth, He is circumcised. After the twelfth day of Christmas on January 6<sup>th</sup> the magi visit and worship our Lord, just thirteen days after our Lord's birth, then they flee to Egypt and return for the fortieth day to observe the law of purification.

In this act, we see the righteousness of our Lord's parents. They obey the Law of God. And by virtue of their obedience our Lord obeys the law. Christ is already fulfilling the Law on our behalf, both through His circumcision, and through His being presented at the temple. In these acts we get a glimpse of our Lord's atonement for us. We get a glimpse of His fulfilling the Law and will of God for us. After these events, other than a brief narrative of when our Lord is twelve years old (which we will get next

Sunday), we do not hear about our Lord's works until He is thirty years old, and is baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan river (of which the Festival date is January 13<sup>th</sup>).

But, fulfilling the Law of God is what our Lord + Jesus Christ was born to do. This is even testified to by the two prophets in today's Gospel reading. Both Simeon and Anna proclaim about this Child that He has come to redeem His people from their sins. He will do this both by fulfilling the Law, which we are unable to fulfill, and by suffering and dying on the tree of the holy cross the punishment which we deserve on account of our manifold sins. For this reason, this Child deserves to be praised and worshiped. For He is destined for the fall and rising of many, and will even pierce the soul of Mary with His death on the cross.

This Child, born in a stable and sought to be killed by Herod, is set for the falling and rising again of many in Israel. He is all that matters. Many will reject Him. They will not fall upon Him and be broken, so He will fall upon them and crush them on their pride. But you, by God's grace, will be broken, crushed by the Law, slain, cut to the heart so that you might be led to repentance. Your old nature has been drowned with Him and buried in Holy Baptism. You have risen from those waters by the power of the Holy Ghost to live as a new Adam. You live in that Holy Baptism. The Old Man in you must again and again, be daily drowned by contrition and repentance. So that the New Man may continually arise by grace. The grace of the forgiveness of your sins heard in the Absolution, tasted by you in bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, heard in the Word preached from the pulpit, and shared with one another as we mutually comfort and console one another in our sins with the message of forgiveness.

For by the Law you are broken, but our Lord mends you with His promise of forgiveness. You have fallen asleep in your sins, but the Lord awakes from your slumber by His Word and you arise out of sleep to hear and proclaim the good news of what our Lord has done for you, just like Simeon and Anna. You were dead in your trespasses, but by the grace of Christ's work of atonement, you have been made alive through faith in Him. You now stand before Him clothed in His righteousness, bearing His works. The old thoughts are purged from your stone-cold heart and the thoughts of His pure heart placed there by the work of the Holy Ghost creating and sustaining life in you. Those thoughts, those perfect thoughts of God's own Son, are your thoughts in Him who gave His life for you. You are righteous for He is righteous. You bear His Name. You belong to Him and He belongs to you.

For, you now cling to Him in faith. The faith which trusts the works of the Lord + Jesus Christ on your behalf. He fulfilled the Law for you. We see Him in today's Gospel, at the beginning of His life, working on your behalf to atone for your sins. Just as His mother Mary was purified on that day, He began purifying you. He began to replace your sinful, disobedient works contrary to God's Law, with His perfectly sinless and obedient works, so that you might have an eternal life. A life with Him and all the saints in Heaven. This is the reward that awaits all those who cling to Him in faith—the reward that awaits all of us.

Rejoice and give thanks for this great work of our Lord. Give thanks for our Lord's obedience to the Law. Give thanks that He has called you out of darkness into His perpetual light. For this Child who is only forty days old begins the work of your atonement; to heal the breach between you and the Lord God, so that you might have peace and joy for all eternity. 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.