

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
Aitkin, Minnesota
December 26, 2021
1st Sunday after Christmas
ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the

grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

Introit

Ps. 98:1–4; antiphon: Is. 52:10

The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations,

and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation | of our God.

Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done | marvelous things!*

His right hand and his holy arm have worked salva- | tion for him.

The LORD has made known his sal- | vation;*

he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of | Israel.*

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, | all the earth;*

break forth into joyous song and sing | praises!

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*

**and to the Holy | Spirit; as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations,*

and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation | of our God.

Collect of the Day

P Let us pray.

O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading

Exodus 13:1–3a, 11–15

The LORD said to Moses, "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."

Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.

"When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.

For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the

LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle

Colossians 3:12–17

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Holy Gospel

Luke 2:22–40

When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what

is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of

him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

Apostles' Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

**and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Sermon Text – Luke 2:22-40

Theme – “Christmas is for Children”

“Christmas is for children.” We hear that so often; don't we? And it's true. The Christmas services and songs, the stories about a baby seem to be made just for children. Add to that the gifts under the tree and the treats and the Grandmas and Grandpas who come to visit. Some might think at Christmastime, “Oh, to be a child again.”

Christmas IS for children and not just for those who are children by virtue of their age and size. We are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Christmas is for all of us who have become a brother or sister of Jesus Christ by faith.

What a tragedy Christmas becomes for anyone who doesn't know Jesus by faith. That's why for many Christmas is a time of depression and loneliness. For some it is even a time of drunkenness as they try to forget all their sorrow and pain that comes when they think that you must be six years old and four feet tall to experience the joy of Christmas.

Our text this morning is about two “children” who truly enjoyed Christmas. In the eyes of most Americans today these two people had very little to be happy about. Both of them probably lived alone. Simeon was an old man getting close to the time when men die. Anna was at least 84 years old and we're told that she was a widow. They are two lonesome, people, close to death, with perhaps no close family. They are two people who would have had the world's blessing to cry themselves to sleep.

These two people are Simeon and Anna who were many years away from the time when they were little children. Yet they were children in the eyes of God in a very important way. It says in our text that Simeon was **“waiting for the consolation of Israel”** (Luke 2:25). We are also told that Anna spoke about the child **“to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem”** (Luke 2:38). What those two sentences tell us is that Simeon and Anna trusted in God's promise to send a Savior.

That simple trust put them in the minority. You see, many of God's people in Israel were looking for a Savior who would be a political powerhouse and a military warrior with an army to drive the Romans from their soil. Simeon knew that Jesus' mission on earth was to die for sin, destroy the devil, and deliver from death. That's why Simeon said to Mary, **“This child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own souls also)”** (Luke 2:34-35). By faith Simeon knew that because Jesus came to save souls and not to send soldiers, His ministry would be under attack, His Messiahship would be questioned, and His message would be rejected by many.

Anna too was a child of God by faith. Our text tells us that she was a **“prophetess.”** That means Anna studied her Bible and explained it to others. If she were around today she might well have been a Sunday School teacher. In any case, she looked forward to her Savior coming.

Christmas and its never-ending joy of forgiveness, peace with God, and the promises of heaven are for God's children like Simeon and Anna. It is for all God's children.

It's for you and for me who are God's children and are a part of His family by faith.

God has made us His children as He worked faith in our hearts. God gives us, His children, special blessings – the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He wants us, His children, to be nourished in the faith. That's why He has given us His Word and Sacraments.

Yes, Christmas is for children, young or old, rich or poor, those with family and those who are all alone. Christmas is for children like you and like me who simply and humbly trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior!

One of the things we admire most about children is that they speak their mind. When they are happy, they're not afraid to show it and to say it. That's why Simeon and Anna were true children of God. They had not lost their love for speaking simple words what was in their hearts. Not only did Simeon speak the beautiful words of the "Nunc Dimittis" which we often sing after receiving Holy Communion, but he also prophesied to Mary of how Jesus would be a Savior that would bring about either the rising or the falling of many people.

Anna too acts like a little child who has just opened up a Christmas present. "Look what I got for Christmas!" As our text puts it this way: **"Coming up to them at that very moment she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem."**

Christmas is for children. It's for those who believe like children of God. It's for those who speak like children of God. It's for those who live like children of God.

St. Luke describes Simeon as being righteous and devout. That means he lived life like we are all supposed to live. He thought about God. He worshiped God in church. He showed kindness and consideration to others.

We also read about Anna's obedience: She never left the temple but worshiped day and night, fasting and praying. Her life was a life of service to the Lord God. She sacrificed and denied herself things for the sake of his Kingdom. She prayed for the good of the church. She spent a lot of time in God's House.

On this Sunday which brings us to an end another year, there are still prayers that need to be said. Devout and dedicated men and women are still needed in the service of the church.

Christmas is for children, all of God's children. It's for the lonely, for the old, for the sinful, for the dying, for those with trials and troubles, for those with or without a family. It's for every sinner who wants to be a part of God's family. That's why God sent his Son Jesus to us, so that his Son Jesus might bring us to him! Christmas is for children. Oh that you and I might never grow up! AMEN

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

Prayer of the Church

Lead Your Church, Lord, to follow the example of blessed Simeon, that all baptized Christians would embrace

the Christ Child by Word and faith, and so be ready to depart whenever they are called.

Lover of mankind, bind our families together in perfect harmony and rule our hearts with the peace of Christ. Cause His Word to dwell richly among us, and let fathers and heads of the household teach and admonish their families in all wisdom. Let our songs, words and deeds be done in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, with thanksgiving.

Almighty God, Your Son alone is judge of the earth, who decides all matters in equity and righteousness. Let us entrust ourselves to Christ and likewise delight in the fear of the Lord. Let us not put our trust in princes and leaders of this world, who must judge by what they see and hear. We pray for their health and wisdom and ask that we may honor them for the sake of conscience before You.

Blessed Lord, help the sick and suffering, especially those who desire our prayers [_____]. Surround them with Your love in Christ and, according to Your gracious will, heal them. Comfort all those who mourn, [*especially _____,*] and fill their hearts with the certain hope of the resurrection.

Let all who come to the Sacrament of the Altar this day see their salvation in the very body and blood of Christ given them to eat and to drink. Let all return home like blessed Simeon, well prepared to depart in peace.

We give thanks for our brothers and sisters who have departed in the peace of faith. Bring us with them to see with our own eyes the light of the nations and the glory of Israel.

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

- C **Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive
those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation; but deliver
us from evil.**
- For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the
glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Benediction

- P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to
you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you
peace.
- C **Amen**

Acknowledgments

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