

12/26/2010

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY 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. Amen.

THE EPISTLE LESSON Galatians 4:4-7
(*The fullness of time has come.*)

4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 2:21-40

(*Jesus is received in as Savior by Simeon and Anna.*)

21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. 22 When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons." 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: **"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."**

36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. **38 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.**

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord,

they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

THE SERMON **If We Knew . . . God Knows and He's There!**

INTRO - This past year we have had more funerals at St. John than I can remember. Some of the funerals were not unexpected because of age or illness. But some were not expected. For example, I did not expect to perform the last funeral on Butch Fondahn. When looking back at the difficulties of life some people have said, "If I knew what was coming, I'm not sure I would have begun." Though, sometimes we don't have those choices, do we?

I. How about Joseph and Mary. What do you think would have happened if they knew all that would happen to Jesus.

- A. Remember, both were open to God's working and obedient.
 - 1. When the angel told Mary she would bear a son, Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, her answer to this troubling situation was, "Let it be to me as you have said."
 - 2. When the angel told Joseph to take Mary home as His wife, we are told, "He did as the angel told Him."
 - 3. But did they really understand all that lay in front of them as parents of Jesus?
- B. We get a glimpse of God's plans in our Gospel lesson for today.
 - 1. In verses 34 and 35 Simeon says, **"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."**
 - 2. Even though Joseph and Mary were serving God and doing His will, they still faced pain and trouble.
- C. But that is part of life in a sinful world, and unfortunately we all know life's troubles.
 - 1. During the past year we have not only had deaths. People have lost jobs. Family members have become ill. Families have had troubles.
 - 2. Living in a world of sin means that trouble is part of life.
 - 3. Living as a child of God, according to God's plan, often invites more trouble as those opposed to God attack.

II. But, remember whose plan Mary and Joseph were following, God's

- A. Simeon may have had troubling words to say, but He also spoke of God's blessings.
 - 1. **For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."**
 - 2. Anna also prophesied about the blessings of the child. We are told, **38 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.**
 - 3. Trouble may have been in the future, but so was God. And remember, this was God's plan. This is God's world.
- B. In the middle of our struggles and pains, God has also sent His blessings.

1. This past year I know of graduations, new jobs, healing, adults coming to faith, new births, and baptisms, to name a few.
2. But we should not be surprised. This child that Simeon held up was not just Jesus, who will save His people from their sins.
3. This child is Immanuel, God with us.

C. So, God is in the future, are you willing to face the challenge of living as His child?

CONCLUSION - This Saturday is New Year's Day. I hope you join us for communion worship on New Year's Eve. But, every year people are anxious for a New Year to begin because they want the troubles of the old year behind them. As children of God, who know God's loving and saving presence, we not only know the truth of those troubles caused by sin, we know the blessings of life, even in trouble, because God is with us, and loves us, and saves us.

Often a little child is afraid of the dark, and wants their parents to join them as they enter a dark room. As we face the coming year, as we face life in a dark world, we can go forward in courage because God is with us in our troubles and blesses us in all situations.