

Where is the Christ Child Found Today?

December 31, 2023

Our Savior is Way Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Happy New Year's Eve! I hope that all of you had a great Christmas and are ready for the New Year. While we did not have a white Christmas, what makes Christmas meaningful, is how easy it is to see God's grace and salvation through the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, not to mention all our family and friends, and all the familiar Christmas songs that we sing, such as "Away in a manger," "In a lowly cradle," and "On Mary's lap...sleeping." They are familiar "old" Christmas songs and hymns that help us to see our Lord clearly, as they bring warmth and joy to our hearts.

But we also hear in the Christmas story that when the angels have "left...and gone into heaven," when the shepherds return to the fields, things are different. While many take time off work, after such a long and big build-up, when we return to our everyday lives, we can be left feeling a little unfulfilled, maybe even a little letdown. Where is the Christ Child, who brought us all that joy?

But good things happen to those who wait. Because just before our Gospel reading for today, after eight days, He was circumcised, and taken to the Temple to fulfill the Law of Moses. Joseph and Mary brought "a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons" to the Temple, offering them to God for giving to them their firstborn son. It was there that He was present and consecrated to God the Father.

And, Simeon, a man who was righteous and devout, had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, the promised Messiah. He knew the Messiah would bring comfort, salvation, and true forgiveness once again. And even though Simeon was old and close to death, he was led by the Spirit, into the Temple at just the right time to see Jesus. And Anna, the prophetess, was there as well. Advanced in her years, she also knew where to find the Christ Child.

While we do not wait for the twelve days of the Christmas season to be over before going back to our everyday lives, we can be led by the Spirit, like Simeon and Anna, who found Jesus “in His temple” because it is in places of worship that He comes to us through His means of grace. And while we can find Him in His Word when we read the bible at home, we absolutely find Him in His Word when it is read to us in the sanctuary, that He might continue to live and remain with us.

And strengthened in our baptismal unity, He also comes to us in the bread and the wine as we partake of His very body and blood given and shed for us for the forgiveness of all our sins. We are blessed to be able to be present with Him and embrace Him in this Holy Supper so that we might fold fast to the life and salvation that He gives to us.

You know, after holding the Christ Child, Simeon 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 having received Holy Communion with Him, we also receive that peace from God, which strengthens our faith, enabling us to praise Him, praise for all that He has done for us—through His life, death, and resurrection.

Our God wants to hear from us. He sends us His Spirit and encourages us to pray without ceasing because He wants to hear from us, that our Lord

Jesus might intercede for us as well as for those we lift up, that we might praise and thank Him like Simeon and Anna once did—not only did Anna give thanks to God, but because of her faith and her knowledge of the Christ Child, she simply could not remain silent and went on to speak of Him to all who were waiting for redemption.

Have you ever noticed the similarity between the old man Simeon with the Christ Child Jesus and the cartoon sketch that is often seen on New Year's Eve? The cartoon sketch shows Father Time, as a worn-out-looking old man with a long white beard and the New Year's infant is the fresh-faced newborn baby in a diaper.

The cartoon reminds us that in any given year, we can have our share of ups and downs, trials and tribulations, good things and bad things happen to us, and after a year's worth of events, we can all look a little worn out by the time December 31 comes around again. This is often a far cry from the full-of-promise baby New Year 12 months prior.

Even though the cartoon might have been a way to remind people of Simeon's encounter with the Christ child, when Christ enters the Temple for His presentation, He enters as the rightful High Priest and is being consecrated for that role. And yet, also as the sacrifice, as His life will show over time, He also becomes the True Temple of God for all time.

As we prepare ourselves for the new year, we are reminded that the joyous light of Christ has come to us. And even though all the Christmas decorations will be taken down over the next week and all the songs that we sang on Christmas Eve will fade away for another year, we do not have to feel unfulfilled or let down after Christmas because we know where to find our Lord Jesus. He is Immanuel—God with us. The incarnate Son of God comes to us through His Word and Sacraments, and He is here today because He has promised to be wherever two or three are gathered in His name.

His Spirit has led us to be here. He is here for you and for all who search for Him, that all might come to receive the light of His salvation, embrace Him, praise Him, and bring all their needs before Him, so that together, we might go from here with His peace, and bear witness to all those who might listen. He alone is our Joy, our Peace, our Comfort, and our Salvation. May He always be with you, in the year to come, as well as all that follows.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.