

# CHRISTMAS 1

December 31 2017

Isaiah 11:1-5

Galatians 4:1-7

Luke 2:22-40

## ***Standing...***

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last time I asked you to not rush into Christmas like the world does.

But I asked you to consider staying in Advent, just a little longer,  
so that it could have its way with you.

Today I ask you to do the same—to just stay in Christmas a little longer,  
Because, the Christmas season is not over.

The arrival of the Word made flesh is too monumental an event  
to have just one eve and a day,  
especially for us who know Him, confess Him and believe in Him.

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

Where St. Luke picks up,

eight days have passed since the birth of Jesus.

Angels have gone back to heaven—

and the shepherds have gone back to their flocks.

Mary is on the mend from giving birth—

without an epidural mind you,

and it's time for the holy family

to have their little baby boy named and circumcised.

Mosaic Law required this to happen on the 8<sup>th</sup> day—

something which spans back to the days of Abraham,

legally incorporating Jesus into the people of God.

It boggles the mind that the very One who made the covenant with Abraham—the One who commanded circumcision as a sign of the covenant is submitting Himself to it.

Our Epistle lesson tells us that Jesus was made under the law,  
 and here...at just 8 days old...He's doing just that—fulfilling the Law,  
 yet...He's doing so passively.  
 Meaning that His parents are doing the work in His place.  
 Moreover, with His circumcision,  
 it's the first shedding of our Savior's blood.  
 So much is happening in that one little verse.

Well, on the heels of that account, St. Luke jumps 40 days after His birth  
 to when the same holy family,  
 in the holy place of the Temple precinct  
 offer a purification sacrifice for Mary and  
 present the little baby Jesus to God.

In order to participate in either of these rituals—  
 you can't just show up at the Temple.  
 Arrangements have to be made.  
 The priest, the space, the sacrifice—they've all got to be secured.  
 Paper work had to be filled out and filed.  
 Why do I say that? Well, in regard to the latter ritual—  
 the one done when Jesus was 40 days old,  
 our Gospel lesson tells us that there is a man by the name of Simeon  
 waiting for the consolation of Israel. And Simeon's not alone—there is a  
 woman named Anna hanging around the Temple precincts as well.  
 And she's done so for decades.

Simeon and Anna are two faithful leftovers in Israel who live in daily repentance and  
 devotion to the Lord, waiting long years for the days to be fulfilled in which the Lord  
 would fulfill His promise to send the Messiah.  
 And that day has finally arrived.

My guess is, Simeon did what he typically did,  
 showing up at the Temple office,  
 and looking through the list of children to be presented.  
 The Holy Spirit would allow Simeon to recognize the Christ Child when He came.  
 And sure enough—  
 when Simeon sees Him, with His devout mother and pious father,

he takes the baby Jesus in his arms and blesses God,  
 singing what we sing a portion of every Sunday, the *Nunc dimittus*.  
 "Master, let your slave go free in peace—  
 for my eyes have seen thy salvation..."

Cradled in Simeon's arms is not only God's salvation, but God Himself—  
 the One promised to come and deal with the issue of Sin! Your sin.  
 It's like Simeon says, "Even if I live 1000 more years  
 these eyes will never see anything greater than this."

The Lord's promise is true,  
 the consolation of Israel has come,  
 the sin of the world now has its greatest enemy—  
 it's this infant.  
 This 40-day-old child is the salvation of God!

Truly, we are weak, but this helpless Child—He's our strength.  
 We are filled with darkness, but He—He is filled with Light.  
 We are sinful.

Yet He is the sinless One who became sin for us to give us His righteousness.

Simeon, like the OT prophet he was, turns to Mary telling her,  
 "A sword will pierce even your own heart..."

Meaning, this Child will break your heart.  
 But before Mary can ask Simeon to explain,  
 the way she did with the angel Gabriel, Anna comes over—  
 recognizes who this is and praises God.

All Mary can do is gather up all of these things  
 and struggle with them in her heart.

From Christ's birth we move to the shedding of Christ's blood,  
 then we move to the prophecies Simeon gave.

In the last passage of the infancy narrative,

Jesus is in the Temple again, but this time at the age of 12.

There He tells His parents,

"I must be about the things of My Father."

What exactly are the things of His Father?

Sacrifice—a sacrifice for Sin is what is required—  
 and Jesus would be that sacrifice.

For your sin and the sin of the whole world.

You know, back in Genesis 3:15—we have the first foreshadowing of One who would resolve the conflict of Sin. And as the plan unfolds, throughout the Old Testament, it becomes clearer and clearer.

The Virgin-born,  
 sinless Son of God would take our Sin upon Himself,  
 paying the penalty for it before a holy and righteous God  
 enabling our salvation—and we,  
 who were enemies of God become His children.

So, how do I sum all of this up?  
 Well, it sounds like this...

***God rest you merry gentlemen,  
 let nothing you dismay –  
 remember Christ our Savior  
 was born on Christmas Day  
 to save us all from Satan's power  
 ere' we had gone astray  
 O tidings of comfort and joy—comfort and joy...  
 O tidings of comfort and joy***

Somebody ought to write a song about that.  
 Be encouraged church for Christ has come to resolve the issue of Sin—your Sin.  
 And because of that,  
 you can rejoice today with Simeon and Anna,  
 for God has kept His Word.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

***Standing...***

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***Sitting...***