

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church  
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,  
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY  
New Year's Day

**HYMNS:** 552 36 277 398 842 512

**INTROIT:** Psalm 8

O LORD, our Lord, how splendid is Your name in all the earth! O set Your glory above the heavens!

Out of the mouths of children and nursing infants You have established strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at Your heavens, which Your fingers have made, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man, that You should be mindful of him, and the son of man, that You should be concerned about him?

You have made Him lower than the angels for a little while and have crowned Him with glory and honour.

You have made him master over the works that Your hands have made. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and even wild animals, the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, which pass through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how splendid is Your name in all the earth!

**COLLECT:** Lord God, You made Your beloved Son, our Saviour, subject to the Law and caused Him to shed His blood on our behalf. Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit, that our hearts may be made pure from all sins; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**READINGS:** Numbers 6:22-27 The Aaronic benediction

Galatians 3:23-29 All of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ

Luke 2:21 The naming and circumcision of Jesus

*Welcome to all worshipping with us today! Happy New Year!*

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***Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.***

**Numbers 6:22-27**

22 The LORD told Moses, <sup>23</sup> “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is how you shall bless the people of Israel. Say to them: <sup>24</sup> “The LORD bless you and keep you! <sup>25</sup> The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you! <sup>26</sup> The LORD look on you with favour and give you peace!”

27 ““In this way they will put My name on the people of Israel and I shall bless them.””

**Galatians 3:23-29**

<sup>23</sup> Before the faith came, we were being imprisoned by the Law, locked up until the faith came, which was about to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, the Law was our guardian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> However, now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. <sup>26</sup> For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> because all of you who were baptised into Christ put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> Moreover, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants and heirs according to the promise.

**Luke 2:21**

<sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, when the time came to circumcise the Baby, He was named “Jesus,” the name that the angel had given Him before He was conceived in the womb.

**THE BLOOD OF CHRIST**  
**Sermon for New Year’s Day, 2023**  
**Luke 2:21**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the

fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before, Luke 2:21:

**On the eighth day, when the time came to circumcise the Baby, He was named “Jesus”, the name that the angel had given Him before He was conceived in the womb.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Eight days have now passed since Mary has given birth to her firstborn. The shepherds who had come to see the little Child have now returned to their fields, while the multitude of the heavenly host has once again returned to heaven. The little baby Jesus is eight days old and now begins to accomplish the mission He was sent to do, that is, to fulfil the Law for us.

Christ’s blood flows for us when He is eight days old. And His blood would flow again when He was crucified on the cross. “*The blood of Christ*” are words spoken so easily that we tend to pass them by without thinking. But let’s think of them for a moment: A man is not God, and God does not have any blood. Rather, the Christ is God, and a man has blood. Look at this eight-day-old Child. He is ‘*true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary.*’ Here is the personal union of the human and the Divine natures. The attributes of each nature are communicated to the other so that in this one Person, a great miracle has come to pass - God has blood, and this is Baby Jehovah!

This is something that we, in our feeble minds, *simply cannot comprehend*. The blood of Christ is first shed for the world in His obedience to the Law - first shed when the Son of God and the Son of Man is circumcised on the eighth day. His name is Jesus. Jesus means Saviour, “*for He will save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21).

When Jesus was circumcised, He commenced His obedience to the Law by being the Sin-bearer. He would continue to fulfil the Law of God until that ninth hour on Good Friday when He died. According to the plan of God conceived before the foundation of the world, the sharp knife began the flow of the blood of Christ when He was eight days old and again while on the cross when the Roman soldier pierced His side. The blood of Christ poured forth to bear witness that the sacrifice was *complete and sufficient*. At His circumcision, the Divine Law-Giver placed Himself under His unforgiving Law in order to fulfil it perfectly for you and me. At His crucifixion, Jesus took our place under the wrath of God and endured the assault of the devil and suffered the abuse of man. He paid the price for every single sin we have committed and shall commit. The Apostle Peter writes, *“You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Peter 1:18-19). By His own blood, and not that of goats or calves, Jesus has entered the most holy place once and for all, becoming the sacrifice for us.

The blessings of Christ’s circumcision became ours when we were baptised. Baptism has replaced circumcision. In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul said: *“In Him you have also been circumcised, by a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sinful nature, by the circumcision done by Christ, **since you were buried with Him by baptism**, by which you were also raised with Him, through the faith that is worked by God, who raised Him from the dead”* (Col. 2:11-12).

Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God - that is the missionary message given throughout the book of Acts. Peter spoke to the Jews saying: *“all the people of Israel should know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, Lord and Christ!”* When those who listened were cut to the heart, and asked what they should do, *“Peter answered them: **“Repent and let everyone of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”*** (Acts 2:36, 38). After his baptism, while

in Damascus, Saul began proving that “*Jesus is the Christ*” (Acts 9:22). That Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of the world, is the message that needs to be proclaimed to the entire world.

Sadly, however, this message isn’t always received. We can think of three reactions to this message.

The first is by those outside of the Church.

These people are offended by the Gospel, and it makes no sense to them. But that should not surprise us because the belief that the baby Jesus is the Lord God Almighty requires the Spirit-given gift of faith. Paul writes, “*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned*” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Without Christ and the Spirit whom Christ sends, the natural state of a human being is completely unspiritual and dead in sin. Luther’s explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, the article on the Holy Spirit, states the following: “*I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, and enlightened me with his gifts.*”

The second reaction is sadly often found within Christian congregations.

Some people are offended by how God has worked out our salvation. They ask: “*This is foolish and crazy! Couldn’t God find another part of the body but this one?*” While they hear and rejoice that the name of Jesus was given on the eighth day, they shy away from the circumcision of the Son of God and the shedding of the first blood of Christ. While they behold an empty cross, they are offended at the sight of a crucifix with the Saviour pinned to the wooden beam and the blood of Christ from the wounds.

These same people also usually react to the words of Christ when He declares, “*This is My body...This is My blood,*” by claiming there is no real presence in the Lord’s Supper. So, because of unbelief in these words and the necessity to teach, we join with the apostle Paul and ask: “*The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ?*”

*The bread that we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ?"* (1 Corinthians 10:16). By receiving Christ in this meal, we do receive His **true** body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, and not only does this Sacrament unite us both to Christ's eucharistic body and blood, but it also unites us with those brothers and sisters kneeling beside us, who all eat and drink from the one cup. In the Lord's Supper, every communicant eats Body-bread and drinks Blood-wine. Therefore, out of true and genuine Christ love and care, children need to be instructed before they partake of the Lord's Supper, and those who do not believe in the real presence are asked not to commune. Luther said in his Large Catechism: "*For we do not intend to admit to the Sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come.*"

One truth that we learn that is of utmost importance in this account of the circumcision of our Lord is this: that when God wants to come to the aid of His people, He does so according to His ways and means, which are often, as far as human discernment and judgment are concerned, nothing less than offensive and ridiculous. Naaman, the leper, was offended at the promise of God attached to the water of the Jordan River.<sup>1</sup> He had expected something more spectacular from God and a charismatic response from the prophet Elisha. Naaman received neither and would have wasted away in his leprosy had God not had mercy on this Gentile sinner and given him the gift of repentance and faith. This brings us to our next reaction.

The third reaction is the one that hears the Word of the Gospel and believes it.

This reaction beholds the eight-day-old Son of Mary, the eternal Christ of God, being carried to the place where He sheds His blood and receives the name given by the angel "**before He was conceived in the womb**" - Jesus. This reaction says, "*thanks be to God,*" and this soul is comforted by the Blood of Christ. It places all its trust on the merits of Christ, ignoring all those voices encouraging it to look inside itself to find

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 5:11-12

comfort.

Therefore, as in the past, we look to the Blood of Christ for the forgiveness of all our sins in this New Year. Through Him, we shall find life and salvation. All our worries are gone through Him, and we are now free. We shall not have any doubts about the future but will instead focus on the eternal reward that awaits those who put their faith in Christ. When we confess our sins and receive absolution, we can be assured that God no longer remembers our transgressions and that the blood of Christ covers a multitude of sins. We remain determined to be faithful to God's Son, who was placed under the Law and circumcised for us. We are determined to reach new heights of loyalty in serving Him who was named Jesus our Saviour, so that He may be glorified and His kingdom extended. We place our lives in the hands of the Lord and remember He is with us not just as a New Year begins but until the end of the age. Amen.

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

#### PRAYER FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY

Heavenly Father, God from everlasting to everlasting, to You a thousand years are like one day, like yesterday already gone, or a short watch in the night: We adore and bless You as our Creator, the Giver of every good gift, the Source of all help, and the God of our salvation.

Your gracious care has brought us to this day, and it is of Your mercy that we have not been destroyed. Year by year You have spared and blessed us. You have not punished us as we deserve, or repaid us for our sins and wrongs. You have continued to give us Your Word and blessed Sacraments; You have blessed us through the Church. You have filled our homes and hearts with good. We confess Your constant love every morning and Your faithfulness every night, and thank and praise Your holy name.

Make the new year, we pray, a year of salvation to us. We enter it in humble trust in Jesus' name, because He has come to save us from our

sins. We know no other saving name; make it our daily shelter and only hiding-place. Grant that we may daily experience its gracious power; and that through it our prayers may rise like incense before You.

Bless Your Church, and let Your Word spread rapidly that Your kingdom may be extended to the ends of the earth. Look in mercy on our congregations, and preserve among us the pure preaching of Your Word and the right use of the holy Sacraments. Do not let Your Word fail to achieve Your purposes, but open the hearts of the hearers to receive it gladly and to obey it willingly. Bless the work of our seminary in raising up men for the ministry. Give guidance to Patrick Hensel, as he continues in his course of instruction.

Bless our country Australia and all its people in this new year. Give our leaders wisdom and power to administer justice and to work for the good of all. Maintain peace in our land and on all the earth. Give success to all work in town and countryside; provide us with our daily bread, and keep us from sickness and all other ills. Crown the year with Your goodness so that Your glory may continue among us.

Watch over our homes; bless them with peace and happiness, and grant that all parents may rule their households in true godliness, and bring up their children in reverence for You. Keep the privileged and prosperous from worldly pride, and the poor and needy from murmuring, envy, and discontent. Provide for widows and orphans and all who are lonely and afflicted, and have mercy on all who are sick. When the righteous cry, hear them, and rescue them from all their troubles.

As all our days have been written in Your book even from eternity, we commit ourselves into Your hands. Keep us from every evil of body and soul, and bless us with what You know is best. Help us in the new year to walk in newness of life, using every today to love and do Your will; so that, if this coming year should be our last on earth, we may at the appointed time end our earthly life in peace and begin the new year of eternity in Your perfect presence and to Your never-ending praise.

Hear us, eternal God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.  
Amen.

The Lord's Supper has always been seen as a sign of unity between those who commune together at the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:17). When Christians partake of the Lord's Supper in a church body that has a confession of faith, they thereby declare that they believe that they are one in faith with those who commune with them. Since people cannot honestly hold two differing confessions at the same time, they cannot honestly commune with those whose confession is in conflict with their own. If any do this nevertheless, they deny their own confession, and so deny Christ Himself (2 Cor. 6:14-18). **We ask visitors who are communicant members in a church not in fellowship with the AELC, or are not familiar with the *AELC Statement of Faith*, to refrain from communing today. If you have questions, please speak with the pastor after service.**

### **Article: God Loves us because He Chooses to**

Why did Christ undertake the difficult, painful work of our redemption? He did not redeem us because He needed us or was forced to do it. As God He needed nothing and no one. As God He cannot be compelled by anyone or anything outside of Himself to do anything. It is likewise clear that Christ did not carry out the work of redemption because He owed us that work. He owed us nothing, except wrath and punishment on account of our sinfulness.

Why then did He undertake this most costly work, the work of redemption? There is but one prompting cause, one reason why. It is grace. God is in His very nature, in His essence, gracious. The words grace and gracious denote a special kind of love, a love that is ultimately unique, found purely in God alone. Grace is that love which is caused by the one who loves, not by the person or thing loved. Human love is usually caused by its object. We like a certain kind of food because it tastes good. The taste is the cause of our liking it. We love certain people because they love us, are good to us, or have certain traits that make them loveable to us. The cause of the love is in the ones we love; that is, it is caused by the object of our love. However, God's love is gracious; that is, God loves not because we, the object, are loveable but because He is loving. When the Scriptures speak of grace in the matter of our redemption, the word is most simply defined as "the undeserved love of

God.” He loves us, not because we deserve it; He loves us freely because He chooses to.

St. Paul gives us this definition of grace in Romans where he speaks of it so often as a cause of salvation in contrast to works, that is, in contrast to anything in us or anything that we do, could do, or even might do in the future. Paul says, for example, in Romans 5:8 that God showed us His love (this unique love which we call grace) by dying for us while we were still sinners. Thus, the cause of His love is and must be outside of us and in Him alone.

Paul puts God’s grace in the sharpest contrast with our works in the matter of redemption when he says in Romans 3:22-24: *“For there is no difference. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* That all have sinned is the constant in our condition; there is never a time this side of eternity when that is not the case. The cause, therefore, of God’s love for us and our redemption must be in God, since on account of our sinful nature and condition the cause of our redemption can never be in us. It is alone in the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Some have foolishly said, “Well then, sin causes Him to love us; therefore, let us sin all the more that He may love us all the more.” Paul says that those who reason this way truly deserve God’s wrath and judgment (Romans 3:5-8) and can count on receiving it because of their blasphemy, a blasphemy which is itself a rejection of the redeeming work of Christ for them! Sin and sinfulness could never cause the sinless and holy God to love us, any more than sickness is the cause of a cure. Sickness shows the need for a cure; it doesn’t cause the cure. Just so, our sin shows how desperately we need the grace of God and the redeeming work of Christ.

## Children's Message:

Did you get any gifts for Christmas this year? I'm sure you did! But what if presents were only given out to girls, and not for boys? Or what if they were only for boys, and not for the girls? Would that be good? No, that wouldn't be fair. That would be wrong.



Thank God, He doesn't act like that! He gives the gift of Jesus and heaven and forgiveness to all believers. It doesn't matter whether you're a boy or a girl. In one of today's readings, St. Paul said: "*all of you who were baptised into Christ put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:27–28).

"*There is neither male nor female*" when it comes to salvation. God gives His gifts to both boys and girls. God gives the gift of Jesus and forgiveness to both boys and girls, no matter who you are, whether you are male or female. That's why Jesus was born and died and rose again!

And Baptism is the way God began to give His saving gifts to you. When the pastor poured on water and said, "*I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*" you became part of God's family. You "*put on Christ,*" kind of like new, beautiful clothes. Even though you don't deserve to go to heaven, God loves you.



God doesn't play favourites. He loves boys just as much as girls. But you are still a boy or a girl, and that will never change. That's how God created you. In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve, the first parents of all of us. And Scripture says, "*Male and female He created them*" (Gen.1:27). You are either a boy or a girl, and that will never change.

So remember: God loves you and gives you Jesus and forgiveness through Baptism and faith, whether you're a boy or a girl. And then remember to thank God every day that He has made you either a boy or a girl, and that He loved you so much that He sent His Son at Christmas to be born and to live, die, and rise again for you. *Thank You, Father, for creating me and calling me into Your kingdom through Holy Baptism. Thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to be my Saviour. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

<b>8 January</b> <b>The Baptism of our Lord</b>	<b>15 January</b> <b>2 Epiphany</b>	<b>22 January</b> <b>3 Epiphany</b>
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR
<b>8 January</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 42:1-9;	Romans 6:1-11;	Matthew 3:13-17
HYMNS: 16 152 791 (789 291) 279		
<b>15 January</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 49:1-7;	1 Corinthians 1:1-9;	John 1:29-42a
HYMNS: 46 39 271 (320 291) 368		

Please take home with you today a copy of the 2023 Service Schedule

Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at [www.aelc.org.au](http://www.aelc.org.au).

Weekly Sunday School lessons are also now available in the Members section.

If there are any late changes to be made to divine services, these will be listed immediately on the website, and a text sent out to members.

***If you are unsure, please contact pastor.***