

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKY
31 December First Sunday after Christmas

HYMNS: 46 30 4 741

INTROIT: Psalm 111

Praise the LORD! I shall give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, in the company of upright people and in the congregation.

The works of the LORD are great. They are studied by all who delight in them. His work is splendid and majestic, and His righteousness endures for ever. He has caused His miraculous acts to be remembered. The LORD is gracious and compassionate.

He has given food to those who fear Him. He will remember His Covenant for ever.

He has shown His powerful works to His people by giving to them the inheritance of the nations.

The works of His hands are faithful and just. All His Precepts are trustworthy.

They are firm for ever and ever. They have been made in truth and uprightness. He has sent redemption to His people. He has ordained His Covenant for ever. His name is holy and awesome.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. All who observe His Precepts have good understanding. His praise endures for ever.

COLLECT: 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 the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

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

READINGS: Isaiah 61:10-62:3 The righteousness and glory of Zion
Galatians 4:4-7 God's Son was born under the Law to make us God's sons and heirs.
Luke 2:22-40 Simeon and Anna see Jesus.

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

¹⁰ I rejoice greatly in the LORD. Let my soul shout with joy to my God! For He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me in a robe of righteousness, like a bridegroom who puts on a splendid head-dress, such as a priest wears, and like a bride who decorates herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For, as the ground makes its sprouts come up, and, as a garden causes its seedlings to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations. ^{62:1} For Zion's sake I shall not keep silent and for Jerusalem's sake I shall not remain quiet until her righteousness goes forth like a bright light and her salvation burns brightly like a torch. ² The nations will see your righteousness and all the kings your glory. You will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will designate. ³ Then you will be a splendid crown in the hand of the LORD and a royal headband in the palm of your God.

Galatians 4:4-7

⁴ However, when the time had fully come, God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive adoption as His sons. ⁶ Moreover, because you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son. Moreover, since you are a son, you are also an heir, through God.

Luke 2:22-40

²² When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, they took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord: "Every first-born male will be called 'holy to the Lord'"). ²⁴ They also went to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." ²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem by the name of Simeon. This man was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the Consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ of the Lord. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the Temple. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him what was customary according to the Law, ²⁸ Simeon took Him in his arms, blessed God and said: ²⁹ "Now, Lord, You are letting Your servant depart in peace, as You have promised, ³⁰ because my eyes have seen Your Salvation, ³¹ which You have prepared in the sight of all the peoples, ³² a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel." ³³ The Child's father and mother were astonished at the things that were being said about Him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and told Mary, His mother, "Look! This Child is appointed for many in Israel to fall and to rise; and to be a sign that is

spoken against,³⁵ that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. A sword will also pierce your own soul.”

³⁶ Moreover, there was Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. She had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage. ³⁷ This woman had been a widow for as much as eighty-four years. She never left the Temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Just then she came up to them, gave thanks to God and kept speaking 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 went back to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

⁴⁰ The Child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom and the grace of God was on Him.

READY TO DEPART IN PEACE

Sermon for the 1st Sunday after Christmas 2023

Luke 2:22-40

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 2:22-40:

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, they took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord: “Every first-born male will be called ‘holy to the Lord’”). ²⁴ They also went to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem by the name of Simeon. This man was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the Consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ of the Lord. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the Temple. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him what was customary according to the Law, ²⁸ Simeon took Him in his arms, blessed God and said: ²⁹ “Now, Lord, You are letting Your servant depart in peace, as You have promised, ³⁰ because my eyes have seen Your Salvation, ³¹ which You have prepared in the sight of all the peoples, ³² a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel.”

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⁴⁰ The Child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom and the grace of God was on Him.

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

Dear friends in Christ,

When Jesus was 40 days old, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus made the short trip to Jerusalem for the purification of Mary and the presentation of the Child in the temple. The law of the purification of a mother is found in Leviticus chapter 12. A poor person was required to bring **“a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons”** as her sacrificial offerings. The law also required that a firstborn male was to be consecrated to the Lord.¹ If the child was not given into the service of the Lord, the parents needed to redeem him by a payment of five shekels.² Mary and Joseph did not make this payment since Jesus was consecrated to the Lord in the fullest possible way. On the 40 day of His life, Jesus is presented to the Lord.

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem by the name of Simeon. This man was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the Consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ of the Lord. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the Temple. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him what was customary according to the Law, ²⁸ Simeon took Him in his arms, (and) blessed God.”

¹ Exodus 13:2

² Numbers 3:46-47

Simeon was waiting for “**Consolation of Israel.**” He was waiting for the comfort the Lord had promised to His people. “*Comfort, comfort My people,*” the prophet Isaiah had spoken centuries before, and Simeon was waiting and wanting to see the fulfilment of that promise. Now, here it comes. The consolation, the comfort, is being carried in *right before his eyes.*

The consolation comes in the person of this little Baby. The Holy Spirit reveals to Simeon that he is seeing the Lord’s Christ. This is the Messiah, the Christ, the promised deliverer-king, who will bring in God’s kingdom of comfort and consolation. The promise is fulfilled. “**The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ of the Lord.**” Now Christ has come, and so Simeon thanks God for fulfilling this special promise to him. Simeon waited well. We do not know how long, for although tradition usually portrays Simeon as greatly advanced in age, Scripture is silent about how old he was. All that can be said is that he waited well in faith for his Saviour to arrive. And just as God promised, the Messiah did come, and now Simeon is ready to see death if that is what is in store for him.

Simeon takes the little Baby in his arms and utters this beautiful psalm of praise: “**Now, Lord, You are letting Your servant depart in peace, as You have promised,** ³⁰ **because my eyes have seen Your Salvation,** ³¹ **which You have prepared in the sight of all the peoples,** ³² **a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel.**”

Here is what it means to be ready to depart in peace. *It’s to know and experience the salvation the Lord has prepared and promised.* That’s what Simeon experienced when he saw that Baby with his own eyes and held Him in his arms. Because of this salvation, come in the person of Christ, now Simeon knew he was at peace and ready for whatever may come next, even his own death. Now, he could depart in peace.

How would that peace, that salvation, that consolation, come about? That’s where our text goes next. Joseph and Mary marvelled at what Simeon said about their Baby. And Simeon blesses them and says to Mary, the Child’s mother: “**Look! This Child is appointed for many in Israel to fall and to rise; and to be a Sign that is spoken against,** ³⁵ **that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. A sword will also pierce your own soul.**”

The Consolation of Israel will come through conflict. Salvation will come through suffering and sorrow. Peace will come through a cross. Mary will experience sorrow too, like a sword piercing her soul, when one day she will see her Son suffering shame and humiliation and death on a cross. But that is how salvation will come. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Mary, true God and true man, will suffer

and die for the sins of all men, winning our forgiveness. And with Christ's sacrificial death comes the salvation, the peace, and the consolation we need so much.

Now, we may not have laid our eyes on the infant Christ being carried into the temple. We have not held that little Baby in our arms, but here's what we do have. We have the same Word of God given to Simeon. Our ears have heard the Word of the Lord. With the eyes of faith, our eyes have seen what God has laid before us: the path of peace, leading all the way to heaven, through faith in Jesus Christ. Dear friends, Simeon has nothing on us. We are just as blessed. We are just as comforted. Like Simeon, we are ready to **“depart in peace”** *whenever the Lord may call us to eternal glory.*

You know, that is why the church sings Simeon's song right after receiving the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament and right before the end of the service. It's because we can identify with what Simeon experienced. We have received the same Saviour. So we sing Simeon's song, *“Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word, for mine eyes have seen your salvation.”* Yes, we can say this too! And we do! With joy and gladness, we praise God for the salvation that comes to us, freely and fully, in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, we can face whatever comes to us this week or in this year to come. Whether that means health issues, financial issues, broken relationships, struggles with depression or loneliness - whatever comes our way, we are ready - even death, if the Lord should decide it's our time to go. We are ready. Not because of our merits but because of the Lord's Christ, Jesus Christ, the infant Messiah, the man dying on the cross, the risen Saviour. This is the One who speaks to us His words of peace. This is the One who has the words of eternal life, and this is God's promise to you, that you have forgiveness and peace - and with them, everlasting life - because of this Jesus Christ.

What hope for the new year! What peace that surpasses all understanding! What joy to know this Saviour! What a blessing it brings to you, your family, and this congregation! Nothing else is like it. Nothing else can fill the void and vacuum you would have apart from Christ. But with Christ we are ready to face whatever comes our way.

Simeon, we hear you! Your song is our song, too. For Christ has come into this temple, and the Holy Spirit has revealed Him to us here also. Now, we are ready to depart in peace. Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Father in heaven, we praise You that when the right time came You sent Your Son to be the Light of the world and to gather Your redeemed people. We thank You that You have adopted us as Your children through Him, and that You invite us to call You: “Abba, Father”. Enable us by Your Spirit to live as Your loving and obedient children, doing Your will with a glad heart and a pure mind. Give us strong faith and love, that people may see that the focus of our lives is not earth but heaven.

Dear Father, show us Your mercy. Deliver us from all evil. Rescue us from all that we deserve because of our sins. Protect us in the hour of temptation. Hold us with Your fatherly hand, and lead us from the restless ways of the world to green pastures and still waters.

Let Your grace rest on us that, young or old, we may grow strong in the Spirit, be filled with wisdom, and increase in the things that please You. Shine in mercy on all who feel the need of Your mighty aid. Brighten lives filled with darkness, and bring joy into homes filled with sorrow or suffering. Give the light of Your truth to those who rule in our land and elsewhere. Fill with Your wisdom all who are in positions of influence in our society so that godlessness, superstition, and ignorance may be removed from us.

Establish the reign of the Prince of peace over the nations of the earth. Bring all to the obedience of the holy Child. Grant that the light of His life, teaching, ministry, passion, death, and resurrection may shine on every land.

We pray for the sick, the wounded, the hurt, the troubled, and the fallen, especially in our congregations. Grant them whatever they need: health of body, strength of faith, firmness of hope, and, above all, the assurance of salvation.

Hear us, O Father, and direct and govern our hearts that, by Your grace in Jesus Christ, we may be ready to depart in peace and enter everlasting life, according to Your promise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Article: I Can't Forget

When someone sins against us, we can't forget. We have eternal memories when it comes to the faults of others. Everyone can relate to this malady. We all have harboured grudges against those who have offended us. We are quick to take offence but slow to forgive. When it comes to the sins of others, our memories are perfect. A wife can remember every time her husband has looked at another woman. He can remember every time she has nagged him. A sister remembers every single time her big brother bullied her, while he remembers every time she got on his nerves. Our memories are better than any elephant when it comes to the wrongs of others.

However, we suddenly develop total amnesia when it comes to our sins. We can't remember our own faults. Our forgetfulness about our own problems is complete. It is absolute. We don't want to admit we are wrong. We refuse to apologise, to confess, to repent. We go through life assuming that all our problems are caused by others. We are oblivious to our own failings. We simply can't remember them.

But our inability to forget the sins of others and to remember our own sins is merely symptomatic of a much deeper, more disturbing forgetfulness. We have forgotten that we are children of God and that we have sinned against Him "in thought, word, and deed." We have forgotten that we daily sin much and deserve nothing but God's wrath and punishment. We have forgotten that we have grieved our God, that we have hurt Him by our iniquity. We have a mental block, amnesia, and utter forgetfulness about our trespasses. We have driven this from our minds. We have hidden it from our mind's eye. We have no recollection of it. We need to admit our wrong, confess it, and repent of it.

When we admit our wrongs, confess them, and repent of them, our memories are miraculously refreshed and we are reminded that God has remembered our plight. He has sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to forgive us. God has not forgotten us. He has made an everlasting covenant with His people, which He will never forget. God's memory is perfect. He

remembers the forgiving work of Jesus on the cross. He holds this before His mind's eye constantly, and He looks at us with the favour and love He has for us on account of Christ.

At the same time, and again miraculously, God forgets. He forgets our sins. He does not remember our trespasses. How remarkable is divine forgetfulness! God remembers only the goodness of Christ; He forgets our evil. He remembers the cross; He forgets our sin. God forgets in His remembering; He remembers in His forgetting. God's memory and God's forgetfulness have brought about the removal of our offense and have paved the way for us once again to be the people He originally created us to be: His people, His friends, His beloved children. Paul writes that *"He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"* (Colossians 1:13-14).

Forgive and forget? We can because God has forgiven and forgotten our sins and will eternally remember His promises to us. In fact, God has given us the commission to forgive others as we have been forgiven. In John 20:23, Jesus tells His disciples: *"If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."* It is not only possible for Christians to forgive those who sin against them, but it is a fundamental characteristic of Christians that they do so. Through faith in Christ, we are given the attitude of Christ (Philippians 2:5). Ever remembering God's forgiveness; we are ever forgetful of our neighbour's sins toward us.



Children's Message:

Happy New Year – almost! Today is New Year's Eve, meaning tomorrow will be the first day of a whole new year!

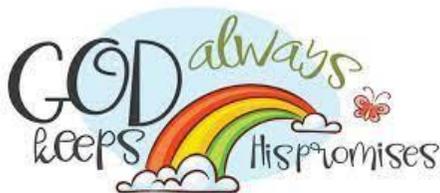
New Year's is a time we often look ahead to the future. We wonder what's going to happen in the year ahead. Any ideas? Here's one thing I think shall happen in the coming year. I'm sure of it. If you look outside right now, you see trees and plants. Sometimes they look nice and green, especially after some rain, but other times they look a bit dry and sad because of no rain. This is nothing unusual because God has said, *"While the earth continues to exist, sowing and harvesting, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will not cease"* (Genesis 8:22). Experiencing rain or drought, or cold or hot weather should come as no surprise to us.

In our First Reading today, the prophet Isaiah said that plants grow up out of the earth and seeds that you sow in the garden grow. They always do - because God makes it that way every year. God promises it. You know what a promise is, don't you? A promise is when we tell someone we'll do something or won't do something. God always keeps His promises - like making plants grow.

What Isaiah is really saying, though, is that God keeps a way greater promise. He says, just as God makes the earth and garden grow plants, so He will cause righteousness to grow. That means He'll make people all over the world right with Him. He'll take away the sins that make us wrong with Him, that keep us from being with Him. He'll make us right so we can live with Him forever in heaven. It's just as sure that God will keep this promise as it's sure He'll make plants grow again this year.

How will He do that? You know! He promised long, long ago that He was going to send us a Saviour. And on Christmas Day, God did keep His promise when He sent Jesus to us. Jesus

is the Saviour God the Father promised. He's the one who died for us. And because God made a promise to send Jesus to save us and then kept His promise, we know He'll keep his promise of us living with Him someday in heaven.



Thank You Father for keeping Your promise to send Your Son Jesus for me, and for Your promise to take me to be with You forever in heaven! Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

1 January 2024 (Monday)	7 January The Baptism of Jesus	14 January 2 Epiphany
10.00am AUB HC	10.00am OAK HC Parish Praise & Thanksgiving Service	8.30am OAK LR 9.0am TMBA HC Harvest 9.00am GRN LR 10.45 am AUB HC Harvest 9.00am MARBURG LR
Monday, 1 January 2024		
READINGS: Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 2:21		
HYMNS: 552 36 35 (161 840) 559		
Sunday, 7 January		
READINGS: 1 Kings 8:22-30; 1 Peter 2:1-9; Mark 1:4-11		
HYMNS: 147 279 256 (40 285 {289 if needed} 437		

Our student Patrick would like to get a youth group going in the new year, and would like to hear from anyone interested in attending and helping to make this happen. Please contact Patrick on 0403 005358 or at patrickhensel95@gmail.com.

FORWARD ANNOUNCEMENT:

January 7, 2024. Trinity Oakey will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of their church building. The congregation wishes to hold a Praise and Thanksgiving service and would like to invite *all members of the parish to attend*. The service will be a 10.00am HC service, followed by a shared lunch. All offering envelopes will be returned to their own congregations.