

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
29th December First Sunday after Christmas

HYMNS: 46 26 44 22 364 29

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.

READINGS

Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15 Consecration of the Firstborn

Colossians 3:12-17 We should live as God's people.

Luke 2:22-40 Jesus presented in the Temple

Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15

¹ The LORD spoke to Moses: ² “Consecrate to Me every first-born male! The **first offspring of every womb** among the Israelites, both human beings and animals, **belongs to Me.**”

³ Moses told the people: ...¹¹ “After the LORD has brought you to the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers and given it to you, ¹² you shall **set apart to the LORD the first offspring** of every womb and every first-born offspring of the animals that you have! If they are **males**, they **belong to the LORD.** ¹³ However, you shall redeem every first-born male donkey with a lamb or a kid and, if you do not redeem it, you shall break its neck! Of human beings, you shall redeem every first-born among your sons! ¹⁴ When in the future your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall tell him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of slave-quarters in Egypt!’ ¹⁵ When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of human beings and the first-born of animals. This is the reason why I am sacrificing **to the LORD the first male offspring** of every womb and am redeeming **every first-born** of my sons.’ ¹⁶ It shall be a sign on your hand and a mark on your forehead! For the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.”

Colossians 3:12-17

¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, dress yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience! ¹³ Bear with one another and forgive one another if anyone has a complaint against another! You also forgive, just as the Lord has forgiven you! ¹⁴ In addition to all these, put on love, which binds them all together perfectly! ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ, to which you have been called in one body, also rule in your hearts, and be thankful! ¹⁶ Let the Word of Christ dwell richly among you, as with all wisdom you teach and warn one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing to God with grateful hearts! ¹⁷ Moreover, whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him!

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.

LORD, LET YOUR SERVANT DEPART IN PEACE
Sermon for the 1st Sunday after Christmas 2024
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 is the Gospel read before, Luke 2:22-40:

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

Dear friends in Christ,

We have spent the Advent and Christmas seasons in the Gospel of Luke. Today, we continue by hearing from Luke about what happened when, 40 days after His birth, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord. We especially want to look closely at Simeon and his actions, especially the words he used when he saw Jesus and His parents come to the Temple. Luke writes, **“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.”**

These words of Simeon are familiar to us because they are what we sing after receiving the Lord’s Supper. But for Simeon, it is what he says when he finally sees the fulfilment of what he’s been hoping for these many years when he holds the Christ Child in his arms. Simeon could now depart in peace, for his eyes had seen the salvation the Lord had prepared. And so it is for us because we, too, can depart in peace.

What a way to go! What a way to depart this life. And what a way to end this year and go on into the next one. Simeon’s song works on all these levels.

First, though, let’s set the stage.

The account of Christ’s birth itself is found in the first twenty verses of Luke chapter 2. Then, in verse 21, we have a brief account of what happened one week later, on the eighth day, which was the circumcision and naming of Jesus, as follows: *“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.”* Then we come to verse 22, the beginning of our text today.

It is now 40 days after the birth of Jesus, and, according to Jewish custom, this was a special day following the birth of a firstborn son, which Jesus was. For one thing, after the birth of any child, at the end of 40 days, the mother would be able to come back to the Temple. This ceremony was called the “purification” of the mother. However, when the child was born as a firstborn son, more was involved in this visit to the temple in Jerusalem.

The origins go back centuries earlier to the time when Israel came out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. You will recall that what compelled Pharaoh to let the people go was the final plague, the death of the firstborn. All throughout Egypt,

in every home, the firstborn son was going to die. But the Israelite homes were spared; they were passed over. Their firstborn sons lived. But to always remember that their lives were spared, every firstborn son from then on was to be dedicated to the Lord, set apart for His service, even if only ceremonially.

But what real service to the Lord, this particular firstborn son will perform! He, Jesus, *will be completely dedicated* to doing the will of His heavenly Father! He will serve as the great High Priest, offering up the perfect, once-and-for-all sacrifice that will redeem all of mankind. *Jesus will do that in His own body when He offers up Himself on the altar of the cross.*

The presentation of the firstborn son, then—this is why baby Jesus is taken to the Temple in Jerusalem. **“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’”).**”

There were lots of people in the Temple on any given day. People would hang around, and worshippers who lived in the area would spend a lot of time there. People would come and go, and pilgrims from out of town would come in for this festival, offering, or other act required in the Law of Moses. On this day, a couple from out of town came in to do the firstborn-son ritual— it was no big deal. It happens all the time. Nobody would pay any particular notice. And there are some older people there in the temple—retired, pious, devout worshippers who love to be in the house of God. Again, nothing out of the ordinary. But this is no ordinary day.

The couple with the baby boy is Joseph and Mary. They’ve got their 40-day-old firstborn son with them, a baby by the name of Jesus. Now, His head wasn’t glowing. There was no halo to mark Him out as special. He just looked like a random, run-of-the-mill, Jewish baby boy—which, in one sense, He was. The Son of God took on our humanity, born in the flesh, our brother, true man, born of the virgin Mary and adopted as the son of Joseph. But at the same time, Jesus was more than that. He is the eternal Son of God, fully divine, the Messiah sent from heaven. Only, you couldn’t see that with your eyes.

Except, on this day, *one man could*. His name was Simeon. There was a woman there, too, Anna, who knew what was going on. But for now, we’re going to focus on Simeon and the song he sang. Both Simeon and Anna recognised this Child as the Messiah; they spotted Him when Joseph and Mary brought Him in. But again, it wasn’t like He was glowing or anything. They only recognised baby Jesus as “the one” because it was revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. God had

made a special promise to Simeon. **“The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ of the Lord.”** He would physically see the fulfilment of all the promises made to Israel before he died. He would see the fulfilment in the coming of Christ. And now here He is, arriving as a little child, presented in the temple. Simeon and Anna are standing in for all of Israel to see the fulfilment of all of the prophecies and all of Israel’s history coming now before their eyes.

This brings them great joy and deep emotion. Simeon goes up to Joseph and Mary and takes the little baby in his arms. He begins a beautiful song of praise to God: **“Now, Lord, You are letting Your servant depart in peace, as You have promised.”** Simeon is referring to the special promise the Lord had given him, that he, Simeon, would not die before he saw the coming of the long-promised Messiah. God now has kept His promise. Simeon has seen this baby Jesus and held Him in his arms. So now Simeon is ready to go. *“Any time now, Lord! I’m ready! I’m at peace. The time of waiting is over.”*

Simeon continues: **“...my eyes have seen Your Salvation,³¹ which You have prepared in the sight of all the peoples.”** Salvation bundled up in this little baby Boy. Even His name, “Jesus,” literally means “The Lord saves.” “The Lord is salvation.” That’s what this Baby is coming as: *Our salvation. Our deliverance.* Sent from God to save us from our sins and to deliver us safe and sound into God’s eternal kingdom. Simeon now gets to hold the Saviour in his arms and see Him with his eyes.

This Baby is the Saviour of all peoples, Jews and Gentiles alike. Simeon declares what the Spirit has told him, that this child is **“a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel.”** The Messiah of Israel was always meant to redeem the non-Jewish nations, too, *not just Israel.* The pagan nations that were sitting in darkness now will see a great Light. We Gentiles who did not know the one true God and thus were groping around in the darkness—now we shall have the Light of the Gospel to illuminate our way and to show us the truth. *Jesus Christ is the Light of the world.*

“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.” And so here, Simeon is basically saying, *“What a way to go! My life is complete now. I have seen the fulfilment of God’s promises. What more is there but to have the peace of knowing the Lord has sent the Savior promised from long ago.”*

Simeon is even given a foreshadowing of how salvation will be accomplished. He tells the child's mother Mary: **“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.”** This is the shadow of the cross. Many will oppose and speak against this Messiah when He grows up. Christ would endure hostility and rejection. He would be nailed to a cross, a sight that would pierce Mary's soul with sorrow as she sees her own son suffer and die.

But this is how the salvation would be won. Christ suffered and died for our sake when He hung there on that cross. He offered up the sacrifice for our sins, which otherwise would have killed us. But now those sins are forgiven in God's sight. *Our salvation has been secured because of Christ. The Baby in Simeon's arms would do it.* We have salvation and peace now, resurrection and life forever, in Jesus' name, through faith in Him. The Holy Spirit worked this faith in Simeon, and He is working it in you, too, through His word of promise, the Gospel.

And so, what a way this is to go! Like Simeon, we, too, are ready to depart this life whenever the Lord decides to call us home. We know our place in God's eternal kingdom is secure, secured by Christ's death and resurrection and made ours when we were joined to Christ in baptism.

What a way to go! What a way it is for us to end the Divine Service of Word and Sacrament, to sing the Song of Simeon. We sing it because we have heard with our ears the precious promise of salvation proclaimed in God's Word. We sing it because we have received into our mouth the very Body and Blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. What a beautiful song to sing! We've heard God's Word. We've received the Blessed Sacrament. Now we're ready to go.

And the Song of Simeon also works for us as a way to go from this year into the next. You see, once you're ready to die, then you're ready to live. No more fear. Your salvation and your peace are secure in Christ. Now we're ready to live, to move into 2025 with confidence and a peace that the world cannot give. Now we're ready to risk loving people, which is always a risky proposition since it means giving of ourselves, forgiving those who have hurt us, and serving others at the point of their need. Now we're ready to confess Christ with our mouths, telling others the good news that we ourselves have received. But we can do it. God has given us peace, a real peace and a sure salvation that is strong enough to live on and love on. We're ready to go. We go into the new year with the strength and confidence that is ours in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. 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: The Foundation for the Joy of Christmas

Along with the great theologian and philosopher Anselm of Canterbury, we ask the question, “Why the God-man?”

When we look at the biblical answer to that question, we see that the purpose behind the incarnation of Christ is to fulfil His work as God’s appointed Mediator. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:5: “*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself*”

Now, the Bible speaks of many mediators with a small or lowercase “m.” A mediator is an agent who stands between two parties who are estranged and in need of reconciliation. But when Paul writes to Timothy of a solitary Mediator, a single Mediator, with a capital “M,” he’s referring to that Mediator who is the supreme Intercessor between God and fallen humanity. This Mediator, Jesus Christ, is indeed the God-man.

In the early centuries of the church, with the office of mediator and the ministry of reconciliation in view, the church had to deal with heretical movements that would disturb the balance of this mediating character of Christ. Our one Mediator, who stands as an agent to reconcile God and man, is the One who participates both in deity and in humanity.

In the Gospel of John, we read that the eternal Logos, the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us. The Second Person of the Trinity took upon Himself a human nature to work out our redemption.

In the fifth century, at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the church had to fight against a sinister teaching called the Monophysite heresy. The term monophysite is derived from the prefix *mono*, which means “one,” and from the root *physis*, which means “nature” or “essence.”

The heretic Eutyches taught that Christ, in the incarnation, had a single nature, which he called a “theanthropic nature.” This theanthropic nature (which combines the words *theos*, meaning “God,” and *anthropos*, meaning “man”) gives us a Saviour who is a hybrid but, under close scrutiny, would be seen to be neither God nor man. The Monophysite heresy obscured the distinction between God and man, giving us either a deified human or a humanised deity.

Against the backdrop of this heresy, the Chalcedonian Creed insisted Christ possesses two distinct natures: divine and human. He is truly human and truly divine, or truly God.

These two natures are united in the mystery of the incarnation, but it is important, according to Christian orthodoxy, that we understand the divine nature of Christ is fully God and the human nature is fully human.

So this one person who had two natures, divine and human, was perfectly suited to be our Mediator between God and men.

An earlier church council, the Council of Nicea in 325, had declared that Christ came “for us men, and for our salvation.” That is, His mission was to reconcile the estrangement that existed between God and humanity.

It is important to note that for Christ to be our perfect Mediator, the incarnation was not a union between God and an angel, or between God and a brutish creature such as an elephant or a chimpanzee. No, the reconciliation that was needed was between God and human beings.

In His role as Mediator and the God-man, Jesus assumed the office of the second Adam, or what the Bible calls the last Adam. He entered into a corporate solidarity with our humanity, being a representative like unto Adam in his representation. Paul, for example, in his letter to the Romans gives the contrast between the original Adam and Jesus as the second Adam. In Romans 5:15, he says, “*For, if the many died as the result of the one man’s transgression, much more, God’s grace and the gracious gift of the One Man, Jesus Christ, have overflowed to the many.*” Here, we observe the contrast between the calamity that came upon the human race because of the disobedience of the original Adam and the glory that comes to believers because of Christ’s obedience.

Paul goes on to say in verse 19: “*For as, through the disobedience of the one man, the many became sinners, so also through the obedience of the One Man, the many will become righteous.*” Adam functioned in the role of a mediator, and he failed miserably in his task. The perfect success of Christ, the God-man rectified that failure. We read these words later in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians: “*As Scripture has said: “The first man, Adam, became a natural living being.” The last Adam has become a life-giving spirit.* ⁴⁶ *However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.* ⁴⁷ *The first man was of the earth, made of dust. The second Man is from heaven.* ⁴⁸ *Those who are made of dust are also like the man of dust, and those who are heavenly are also like the Man from heaven.* ⁴⁹ *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the Man from heaven.”* (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

We see then the purpose of the first advent of Christ. The Logos took upon Himself a human nature; the Word became flesh to effect our redemption by fulfilling the role of the perfect Mediator between God and man. The new Adam is our champion, our representative, who satisfies the demands of God’s Law for us and wins for us the blessing that God promised to His creatures if we would obey His Law. Like Adam, we failed to obey the Law, but the new Adam, our Mediator, has fulfilled the Law perfectly for us and won for us the crown of redemption. That is the foundation for the joy of Christmas.

Children's Message:

We have important things to remember every day. For example, brushing your teeth every day is very important, but it's easy to get distracted and forget to brush. Some of you may have homework to do after school, but it's easy to forget that!

How do you remember to do what's important? Some people have routines to help them remember things. Maybe your bedtime routine is to put on pyjamas, brush your teeth, and then say prayers. That order helps you remember everything you need to do, like brushing your teeth. Some parents make charts to help kids remember things. The chart might have a checklist to do after school—like eating a snack, doing homework, and washing for dinner. The chart helps you remember all you need to do, including homework.

In our First Reading today from Exodus, we hear God wants His people to remember something very important—that He saved them from being slaves of an evil king in Egypt. To make sure they remembered, He gave them a routine to follow. They were to give every firstborn child and animal to God, then buy the child back with a lamb. That seems like a strange routine, but there's more to this story.

There's something even more important than coming out of Egypt that God wanted them and all of us to remember: that He saved us from being slaves to sin and the evil devil. The routine God's people followed pointed to God's saving plan for us. God sent His own firstborn Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour! Jesus is sometimes called the Lamb of God because God gave Him up to save us, His children.

How can we remember that Jesus saves us? We just celebrated Christmas, and we remember the manger, which reminds us that Jesus was born to save us from sin. What about a cross? We have crosses in church and at home, and we sometimes wear

them to remind us Jesus died on the cross to save us from sin. We also have routines like going to church on Sundays and reading our Bibles and praying every day to help us remember all God does for us.

Brushing teeth and doing homework are important things to remember to do. But let's be sure to remember the most important thing: Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away our sins so we can be children of God.

Dear Jesus, help me to always remember that You are my Saviour, who has taken away ALL my sins! Amen.



WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

1 January 2025 New Year' Day	5 January 2 Christmas	12 January The Baptism of our Lord
10.00am AUB HC	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	AELC Service 10.00am TMBA HC
Wednesday, 1 January 2025		
READINGS: Number 6:22-27; Galatians 3:23-27; Luke 2:21		
HYMNS: 554 36 324 151 (tune 67) 291 508		
Sunday, 5 January		
READINGS: 1 Kings 3:4-15; Ephesians 1:3-14; Luke 2:40-52		
HYMNS: 556 39 588 (181 840) 20		
Sunday, 12 January		
READINGS: Isaiah 43:1-7; Romans 6:1-11; Luke 3:15-22		
HYMNS: 392 301 279 42 322 791		

12 January. Please bring something along for a shared lunch, and remember to place your offering in envelopes marked back to your congregation. Loose change will go to the Parish treasury.

On 12 January, after service, a Parish Executive meeting and a Seminary Committee meeting will be held.