**Luke 2:22-40**

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord **23** (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) **24** and 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, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. **26** And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. **27** And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, **28** he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, **29** “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; **30** for my eyes have seen your salvation **31**  that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, **32**  a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” **33** And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. **34** And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed **35** (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” **36** And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, **37** and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. **38** And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. **39** And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. **40**  And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

**“Caroling After Christmas”**

Grace to you and peace from the Son of the Father from all Eternity and true man born of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen. You ever notice how our culture is always on the move. The fuel for such momentum rests in that motto, “Out with the old and in with the new.” Christmas songs filled the air for a while, but now that all the shopping days are done. It is time to generate other sounds so people continue to spend, spend, spend. Music has become a major tool for success in our modern economic system. This influential power of sounds we hear affects us. It leads to changes taking place even right after holiday. Some are already in competition over who is the most efficient in their Christmas clean up.

Why all the rush? It is not as if the last month was busy or anything! Just because we have the boxes checked off the “to-do” list does not mean Christmas is over. Rather than just move on, Christians celebrating the twelve days of Christmas witness a needed rest to our overworked society. Matter a fact, the music by the heavenly hosts saying, “Gloria to God in the highest” is what now inspires such singing in the Church. It was especially during the Reformation that Luther released such music of song to be in the mouths of God’s people. We still enjoy these benefits today and Simeon in the temple shows us this blessing. There is no need for a big letdown after Christmas. Christ’s arrival lets us sing of our salvation from day to day.

Mary and Joseph were just doing what was good after Christ was born. They were caught up in the regular responsibilities of being parents. The humility of God’s Son was that He needed to be cared for demanding their complete attention. Besides dirty diapers, regular hours of feeding, unexpected crying, and plenty of bills to pay. There was also the need for Mary and Joseph to keep in-line with the Torah or the Law. Eight days after birth the Christ child needed to be circumcised as God commanded Abraham. In addition, Levitical Law required that after forty days of a birth there was to be sacrifice made at the temple for purification. These were godly Jewish parents doing what needed to be done. Yet, how was upholding the law anything glorious when compared to angels sending shepherds to behold the Savior born of the virgin Mary?

The Law is good but never lifts up the heart to sing of salvation. God still uses government to keep good order in a society, but how can anybody live up to all that standards we set? Let alone there are the various vocations in life, but who loves one’s spouse without limit, raises their children without some failure, or are able to meet all the demands for work? Finally, all must face the Commandments. How can anyone pass this test with flying colors to love God and our neighbor more than our self? As our Lutheran Father teach us, “The incipient keeping of the law does not please God for its own sake, but for the sake of faith in Christ. Without this, the law always accuses us” (Tappert 130:144). In other words, you are constantly dealing with the nagging question over every person, “Is it enough?”

By the presence of the infant Jesus, Simeon had a reason to sing in the temple. The place where continual sacrifices were offered by the dying cries of animals heard a different sound that day. The Spirit of God upon Simeon moved Him to sing praise over the Holy Son of God in human flesh. It was to look upon the promised messiah who came to fulfill the Law for all people. Here was the blessed hope sent by God to “redeem those who were under the law, so that we might be adopted as sons.” The demands of the Law that none could answer met its match in Christ. Simeon’s song echoed throughout the temple silencing the Law with sounds of the Gospel. His opening words sets the tone, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace…” The peace on earth promised by the angelic hosts on Christmas to shepherds now came to Simeon. His eyes were no longer to look upon the despair of life, but the life God had sent to die for sinners.

Christ bears the Law for us in His body to sing songs of gladness before Him. It means the baptized, the church, continues on with Christmas. “Her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.” We sing because God dwells with sinners to stand in our place. This consolation more than came into the temple. Jesus has become the sacrifice to see His cries of agony as the answer of peace for all. He turns the proud who view the law to be easy or forgiving to the uncomplaining Savior of the cross. He turns the troubled spouse, parent, or worker to the Lord who comforts us by His commitment of love. Fixed are your eyes to be on Jesus like Simeon. The reason to sing comes now through Christ hidden in His Holy Word and Sacrament. To depart in peace means God sets us free from the shackles of sin, death, and the Devil and even the Law’s curse.

Anna heard the song of Simeon and shared it to any who had ears to hear. It was clear that not all would be open to such a change of tune that rang out from the temple. Simeon made it clear, “This child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel.” Yet, an elderly widow went about her time thanking God and being able “to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” The outcome was outside of her hands, but the song of Christmas is what truly kept her attention. Anna shows that hardiness of the saints in this world. As Luther states, “We must not be troubled by the fact that the vast majority find Christ a stumbling block and treat his gospel shamefully…We will have to live with this, while we meanwhile persist in being Christians and also content to be part of the small group which does not stumble, but firmly holds to and stands up for this King” (Postils Vol. 5 60).

The song of worship becomes the confession to celebrate in our lives to others. Music is about sales in our modern age, but not so for the angels, Simeon, or Anna. This sound seeks to glorify the greater salvation of the only Son of God come down from heaven. Christ makes His presence known in a humble way in the Church. He still offends with simple water, bread and wine, along with called servants who speak His Word of forgiveness. Yet, like the infant Christ before Simeon, we cradle Him in these gifts as comfort and redemption that God alone gives. It is for those burdened by responsibility, work, and the Law asking that question, “Is it enough?” The singing over Mary’s Son would fade until years later when Christ came at the preaching of John. May this not be the letdown we have as the baptized after Christmas or on the Last Day! Christ’s arrival lets us sing of our salvation from day to day. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.