

Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of December 27, 2009

What Child is This? The Child Who Opens Eyes (Luke 2:22-40)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for today's homily is from the second chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. Our Lord says to us:

"Simeon took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.' And His father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him. ³⁴And 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.' 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'".

This is the Word of God.

Dear friends in Christ, Two days after Christmas and the celebration continues! Hundred of millions of people around the world have put up lights, hung decorations, and soon, all rejoice for this wonderful season. It began for us two days ago on Christmas Eve as we heard the message of good news and in response, sang with jubilant songs of praise; and this party is still going on. And yet the joy of this season comes from what might appear on the surface to be rather common event.

We ask in the hymn, "What Child is This?" This was the question the shepherd should have taken care of their sheep until an angel of the Lord appeared. The holiness of God struck fear into their hearts as they stood completely awe struck. The angel had a once in history announcement for them. He said, "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord." Now the angel continued with an important instruction. He gave them a sign, a miracle. But it wasn't what you might think for such a significant occasion. It wasn't a sign like the burning bush in Moses' time or something overwhelming as the parting of the Red Sea. The sign was... a baby. Nothing particularly unusual; in fact, the only thing remarkable about this was that the baby was lying in a manger.

What Child is this? The shepherds must have asked themselves. They ran to see Him even if the sign of the Christ-child seemed less than extraordinary. But this is the way God works. He wraps His divinity with the earthly and hides His glory in these seemingly ordinary things. Like treasure hidden in jars of clay, God has come to live in His people. He comes in the Holy Spirit to make you His body. Only temple and home.

And so here we have the Almighty Son of the Most High come to His people not with an awesome display of power and glory, notwithstanding of the great trumpet of God. Instead, He comes in the quiet of the Last Days.

