

Order of Worship for December 26, 2021 10:00 AM

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Carol – “*Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light*” – Hymn #378

Confession of Sin:

P: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

C: **Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.**

P: In his name let us make confession of our sins. For his sake let us seek forgiveness. Father in heaven,

C: **we do not deserve to be called your children, for we have disobeyed. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. We deserve your wrath and punishment.**

P: "His name shall be called JESUS, for he will save his people from their sins."

C: **It is in the name of Jesus that we come before you, heavenly Father, pleading the merits of his holy life, his innocent suffering and death.**

P: Good news! Great joy! A Child is born to us, a Son to us is given, a Savior, Christ the Lord!

C: **"He shall save his people from their sins."**

P: All who receive him, who believe in his name, are given power to become the children of God.

C: **Glory to God in the highest! And peace to God's people on earth. Amen.**

Gloria in Excelsis – “*Angels We Have Heard on High*” – Hymn #368 (vs. 1)

Prayer of the Day

P: 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 and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Old Testament Lesson – Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15

R: The LORD said to Moses, “Consecrate to Me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is Mine.”

Then Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place... “When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the

womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.'"

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson – Colossians 3:12-17

R: Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Preparation for Gospel – *“Rejoice, Rejoice This Happy Morn”* – **Hymn #391**

Holy Gospel – Luke 2:22-40

P: And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” 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. 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. 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, 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 marveled at what was said about Him. 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 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” 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, 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. 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. And when Mary and Joseph had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon Him.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Catechism Reading – The Second Article of the Creed – pg. 322

Sermon Hymn – *“In His Temple Now Behold Him”* – **Hymn #519**

Sermon – *“The First Move”* – **Exodus 13:1-3a**

Husbands are real experts on what is wrong with their wives. The husband could say, “They are too picky. They don’t let us rest. They expect us to understand all that is going on in them. They change their moods so often. They don’t realize that we can only focus on one thing at the time.”

Wives, of course, then, are experts on what is wrong with their husbands. They could say, “They are slobs. They don’t realize all I do. They don’t listen. They spend too much time in front of a screen.”

The conflicts between husbands and wives, friends, fellow employees, nations don’t end because of complaints about how bad the other side is. They begin to end when one side takes the responsibility to do what they can. In a sense they give in. As a husband I may be an expert on all that is wrong with my wife, but I can’t change her. What I can do is something about what is wrong with me. Until I do that, there is nothing I can do to end the conflict.

In Exodus 13 God seems to tell the people of Israel to do something that puts the responsibility all on them. He says, “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is Mine.” The firstborn is what you have already. You hope you have more livestock, more sons, but the first is dedicated to God. The first born “opens the womb.” There are no others unless that comes first. Also the firstborn son is the one who receives the inheritance. In a sense by asking for the firstborn, God is saying to Israel, “Dedicate all to me.” In other words, “You make the first move. It is up to you to make this relationship between us work.”

In a similar way God tells the people of Israel to give Him their first fruits. When they harvested, their first crop was to be dedicated to God. The idea was, “Give your first to God, and He will make sure you get the rest.”

I have told the story many times of the man who was lost in the desert. He was about to give up and die when he saw what he thought was a shack in the distance. He wasn’t sure if it was a mirage or not. But he kept going and found that the shack was real. He went inside and

found a pump with a note and a bottle of water attached to it. The note told him to not drink the water, but pour it into the pump to help prime it and get water from a well. He asks himself, “What shall I do? If I pour the water down the well, I may get nothing. If I drink it now, at least I get some water.”

So it is with what God called the people of Israel to do. And it is what God calls us to do. Jesus said, “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and these things will be added to you.” In other words, “Pour the water down the pump and trust that God will give the rest.” It seems as though God is putting it on us to make the first move.

What we are forgetting is what God asks for is already His. As Moses told the people, “Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place.” God wasn’t talking to anyone when He asked them to dedicate their firstborn to Him. He was talking to the people of Israel. Just back in chapter 12 of Exodus He had rescued them from the Egyptian army by allowing the people to cross over the Red Sea on dry ground. God had given them everything. They already owed all to Him. He had already made the first move.

So He has with us. God made us and the world we live in. It all belongs to Him. When He asks for the first fruit, He is only asking for what is already his. And that should be enough.

But it isn’t enough for God. Joseph and Mary took the baby Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate Him to God. How can God (Jesus) be dedicated to God (the Father)? He can because in Jesus God became human. He came to do what we people fail to do.

We expect God to make the first move. But we forget how He already did by making us and giving us each other. Then we expect Him to do more—to fix our problems. Then when He doesn’t, we live as if He doesn’t exist.

Juan Marichal, Gaylord Perry, Don Drysdale—those are names of some Hall of Fame pitchers who depended on the spit ball—an illegal pitch. You might expect that of people from whom winning was all that mattered. But another Hall of Fame pitcher who depended on the spit ball was Don Sutton. Sutton was a devout Christian who read his Bible every morning. Yet, he still used the spit ball.

Gino Marchetti was a Hall of Famer who was voted one of the greatest defensive ends of the 20th century. Opposing quarterbacks feared his pass rushes. Part of his success was because of his uncanny ability to anticipate the snap and take off just before it. He was actually offside most of the time. Yet Marchetti was a devout Roman Catholic.

I am not trying to get on those old athletes’ cases, but think of how we act as if God didn’t exist. We look at images of provocative or undressed women. We don’t even bring it up in our minds to God because we know we don’t want to repent of it. Or tune out when we hear about how we can get involved in helping share our faith with others. Or we say, “Let the young ones do it.”

But what did God do? He could easily say, “Forget you,” to each of us. Instead He sent His son into the world. This was His only begotten son, His beloved son. And that son was dedicated to His Father, which meant it was His life that was sacrificed for you and me.

While we argue and point the finger of blame elsewhere, God did something. He made the first, second, third, and on and on moves. He came to us in Jesus and continues to come to us so that we respond in love to Him.

God offered His first born so that we can willingly offer our lives to God. But we offer them not to suffer and be nailed to a cross, but to live in God's love. No it isn't always easy. It is like the struggles in a marriage because it is not all about "me." But in that relationship we can have someone who loves us and shares with us. How much greater the relationship God offers to us when He always makes the first move.

Prayers

P: Lord, in Your mercy...

C: **hear our prayer.**

Hymn before Communion: – *“Now Sing We, Now Rejoice”* – **Hymn #386**

Call to Communion: (Pastor)

The Lord's Prayer:

The Words of Our Lord:

Distribution:

Hymns – *“O Little Town of Bethlehem”* – **Hymn #361**

“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” – **Hymn #366**

Song after Communion – *“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”* – **Hymn #388**

Prayer after Communion (Pastor)

C: **Amen.**

Blessing (Pastor)

C: **Amen.**

Closing Hymn – *“Let Us All with Gladsome Voice”* **Hymn #390**

Postlude –