

1st Sunday after Christmas

December 30, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Labuhn

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I hope that you all had a great Christmas this year, celebrating the birth of our Savior. I know that we had some wonderful worship services with some 1,945 in attendance. I certainly enjoyed time with family and friends, and spending time with you all. Carols were sung, cards were opened, and the presents were unwrapped. The special meal that was prepared was enjoyed, along with many of those Christmas cookies and goodies along the way. And I am appreciative of all the thoughtful gifts that were received. Jesus is our Immanuel – God is with us, and it's been a very good Christmas.

I don't know about you but a couple days ago, I was beginning to feel exhausted from all of the "extra" activities this Christmas. I found myself starting to look forward to when things might return to "normal" once again. I know that some folks feel that way because some have started to take down their Christmas decorations already. Maybe they're getting ready to ring in the New Year with that old adage - out with the old and in with the new. Certainly, 2018 was a tougher year for many of us than others, and I'm sure that we are all ready for a new and better year to come.

That's certainly the image that we get from our Gospel reading for today. Mary and Joseph were going up to the temple to do what

was required of them under the law of Moses. After all, according to Leviticus, they were to present their son to the priest and to offer a sacrifice of purification – a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons were offered. However, we encounter two faithful saints in our reading who seemed to be hanging on to life until they saw the promised Savior, whom they recognized in Jesus.

Simeon - a man who was considered righteous and devout, who had been patiently waiting for the Salvation of the Lord to come, and finally he saw that long-awaited Salvation. Led by the Spirit, Simeon had come to the temple. Simeon had held firm to the promise that he would not see death until he saw the Lord's Christ. He came up to Mary and Joseph and took the child in his arms. He blessed God saying, "***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.***" (Luke 2:29-32)

While this would have been shocking to many parents today, Mary and Joseph marveled at what he said, but when Simeon went on to say, was even more shocking to them. After blessing them, Simeon said to Mary, "***Behold, this child is appointed for the rising and falling 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.***" (Luke 2:34-35)

Sometimes, we can wish that we might have that kind of patience, faithfulness, and discernment in our own lives. We can find ourselves asking for the right words to say to people who express their thoughts and opinions about Jesus. Sometimes, we can be amazed at the words of faith that come from people's mouths we never knew believed in Christ. We can also be shocked when we hear the opinions and thoughts by those who grew up in the church, even disheartened at times when we hear some of the words that come out of our own mouths.

Jesus, true man and true God came to be with us. He felt and experienced all those things that we feel and experience in our own lives. He understands how hard life can be, how busy we feel at times, and how thoughtless we can be when we express our thoughts and opinions. Yet, He willingly came to us so that He might be one of us and fulfill the law perfectly on our behalf. He goes on to become our sacrifice, shedding His very blood for us on the cross, giving His very life for all of us, who can find ourselves opposed to God at times by our thoughts, words, and actions.

Having been raised from the dead, Jesus gives us the hope of salvation. A faith which we receive by His Spirit, enabling us to discern what is good, right and salutary in our lives. It's here that we are brought into the church through baptism and receive His Spirit. His Spirit leads us where we can feel and experience the proclamation of His Word, and receive His Body and Blood – in, with and under – the bread and wine. When this happens our faith grows all the more so that we might boldly proclaim that Jesus is our Salvation to others in our lives.

“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.”

Tomorrow is New Year's Eve and we will be saying goodbye to 2018. I pray, that empowered by the Spirit, we have been able to make our peace with all that has happened in 2018, give thanks and praise to God for being with us and seeing us through, and welcome in a new year by looking forward with the hope that Jesus brings to us.

Not too sure what 2019 has in store, but knowing that no matter what happens, Jesus will see us through and be there with us. He is our promised Immanuel, providing us that everlasting hope of salvation, enabling us to give Him thanks and praise both now and always.

In Jesus name, Amen.

