

December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Saint Paul wrote in Galatians chapter four, **when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.** It's all about timing. The timing of the coming of the Son of God is nothing short of a miracle. At just the right time, Christ comes to save the ungodly, you and me.

The timing was just right. So many things in life really come down to timing. In a football game, if a throw is off by a fraction of a second, the game can be lost. You cook a Christmas cookie a little too long or not quite long enough, and the thing can be ruined. Or a fruit that is pulled off the tree too early is hard or too late is mushy. It is all about timing. So it is that everything was ripe for the coming of the Son of God. And the picture before us today is one of the most vivid pictures in Jesus' young life.

There was a ritual in Jesus' day that was prescribed by the Law of God. 40 days after a male child was born, he was to be presented in the Temple in Jerusalem, and two turtledoves were to be sacrificed on the Altar for the child's purification. It is called the Presentation. So this is our scene. Mary and Joseph bring Jesus, not yet six weeks old, to the Temple in Jerusalem for His presentation before the Lord.

While they are there, an old man named Simeon comes to meet them. He has waited his whole life for the consolation of Israel, and it was revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit that he would not taste death until He had seen the Lord's Christ, God's promised Messiah. And so he waited, and waited, and waited, until the time was just right for the coming of the Son of God in the flesh. This old man takes the young Jesus into his arms and sings:

**"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."**

In the midst of all that gold and glitter and glory, God's presence was now contained in this little baby. **My eyes have seen your salvation**, Simeon cried out. Not in the wonder and majesty of the building, but in a little baby, asleep in his arms. The earthly Temple built with hands had served its purpose. Now God would dwell in His Temple not built with hands. Now God dwelled in the person of Jesus Christ.

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This is the miracle of what we call the Incarnation. God takes on human form. The majesty and splendor of the creator of the universe is hidden in the most ordinary of things. For what could be more ordinary, more *normal*, than a baby? Who could be afraid of an infant nursing at his mother's side?

That is the miracle of the Incarnation which Simeon held in his arms. And that is the miracle which we hold in our mouth at the Lord's Supper. Christ our Lord continues to come to us in the ordinary and humble things of the earth. Word, water, bread and wine are His vessels. But like Simeon so many years ago, God's salvation, indeed His very glory is contained in these humble gifts.

Christ our Lord wants us to believe in Him and trust that He will give us all that we need, both for this life, and for the next. We pray in the Lord's prayer that He would give us this day our daily bread AND that He would deliver us from evil. He will take care of us. The One who comes down to earth as a little child will bring us up to heaven with Him.

God's glory, His wonderful forgiving presence, is to be found in that little Babe, Jesus Christ, the Righteous one. It doesn't make sense to our eyes. We cannot comprehend how all of God's might and power can reside in the most helpless of infants. But it is true. And that is the miracle which we receive Sunday after Sunday in His Holy Supper. Through the humble means God uses, we can expect great things to happen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in true faith, unto life everlasting. Amen