

# "The LORD Comes to His Temple"

Sermon #5

## "The Temple of God is Born"

Luke 2:10-18

24 December Anno Domini 2002

The Festival of the Incarnation of Our Lord - Christmas Eve

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

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

Dear Baptized,

On this holy night and in this holy place we are blessed to join the angels and the archangels and all the company of heaven to be in the gracious Presence of the LORD God Almighty and to rejoice in the Festival of the Incarnation of Our Lord. This Divine Service is taking place throughout the world this night - just as it did when a little congregation assembled around a manger's guest in the little town of Bethlehem. The Birth of our Redeemer has happened.

Please listen to Luke 2:10-18 and hear the announcement that ...

... "The Temple of God is Born"

"The angel said to them [the shepherds], 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you Good News of a great joy which will be for all the people. For to you this day, in the city of David, a Savior is born Who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!' When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this Child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

The Temple of God is born. Now this may sound strange for we think of a temple as being something that is built, not born. Solomon built the Temple of the LORD based upon God's design revealed in His Word. Though Solomon's Temple was destroyed, it was replaced by another that took forty-six years to build (John 2:20). Those are temples that were fashioned from stone, wood and fabric by human hands according to the divine design and in which was the Presence of the Lord in cloud and fire and glory. The Temple of God born in the City of David is the Son of God and the Son of Man.

In fact and in truth, at the moment of His conception, the divine and human natures came together, never to be separated again. The Temple of God was, at that instant, a single cell - very God of very God and also true man. Nine months later the Temple of God is born. In this Temple the whole fullness of God dwells bodily (Colossians 2:9). Bethlehem's Babe is God Incarnate ... Emmanuel - God with us.

The Temple of God is born.

Behold this tiny infant in the manger. Do you love Him? Oh, yes, very much so, for everyone loves a baby, especially this one. But do you love Him above all others - more than mommy or daddy? - more than husband or wife? - more than son or daughter? - more than you love yourself? Not likely. Do you trust Him? Well, what does that mean? How does one trust a newborn infant? What is a tiny baby capable of doing that would cause anyone to trust Him? Still the question remains, Do you trust Him above all others? Again, not likely. Do you fear Him? You might reply that no one is afraid of a baby - a baby cannot hurt anyone. But you were not asked if you were afraid of Him; you were asked whether or not you fear Him.

You see, this is First Commandment stuff, and if this Baby "is Christ the Lord," - and He is! - then He is God Who is "I AM" before Abraham was born - then He is God Who bent down and wrote with His finger ... "I AM the LORD thy God ... Thou shalt have no other gods in My Presence" (Exodus 20:). What does this mean concerning this "Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger"? Answer, You should fear, love and trust in Him above all things.

The purpose of this commandment, therefore, is to require true faith and confidence of the heart, and these fly straight to the one true God and cling to Him alone. Here are those shepherds who "went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." "The meaning is: 'See to it that you let me alone be your God, and never seek another.' In other words: 'Whatever good thing you lack, look to Me for it and seek it from Me, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, come and cling to me. I am the One Who will satisfy you and help you out of every need. Only let your heart cling to no one else' (Large Catechism).

Now we feel uncomfortable, for we know that our hearts have not always clung to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Our words and deeds have only bore fruit that comes from such unclean hearts. What are we going to do with this Temple of God recently born and now sleeping in a manger? Is He a threat? Herod will seek to slay this Child. Or is the Christmas Jesus a manageable threat? - a Baby Who is kept at arm's length, approached on the first day of Christmas, and then left in His cradle much as we stow the doll and the manger used in the children's service until next year?

The Babe held in the arms of Mary and entrusted to the care of Joseph is the Temple of God - the LORD God Almighty. That's Who He is and when people realize this, they wonder what this means. Why was He conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary? What has He come to do?

Well, children, the LORD has not come to put check marks on the blackboard behind your name every time you've been bad, or to find out if you've been naughty or nice. Listen, youth, the advent of the One True God in Bethlehem is not to be a dictator that requires you to wear a WWJD bracelet - a "What Would Jesus Do?" bracelet. Listen, grown-ups, Jehovah was not born in order to give you eleven steps to God-pleasing parenting, or nine ways to being a good spouse, or ten Christian things to do when you're retired. In short, the Incarnation of the Son of God was not to help you become a

good person, or even a better person.

Listen to the Christmas Angel announce to the shepherds the reason for the Incarnation: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you Good News of a great joy which will be for all the people. For to you this day, in the city of David, a Savior is born Who is Christ the Lord." Christ the Lord was born to be the Savior of the world. He came to save you from yourself and your sins. He came because you were naughty ... because you have, every day, broken His Commandments ... because you have not been a God-pleasing parent, or because you've not been a good spouse, or because your retirement years are filled with sloth and pride and complacency or complaint.

His name would be Jesus, which means "savior." That's what God came to do. He was also circumcised on the eighth where He shed His first Blood in fulfilling the Law. Jesus touched the water of the world, thus sanctifying its use in baptizing infant, elderly and all nations in between, doing so in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. He was tempted as we are, yet without sin, and defeated the devil. He prepares His Table before us, even in the midst of this fallen world, and this Manna from above and feeds His own with His very Body born of Mary ... He is the Good Wine of the wedding feast and His sin-atonement Blood shed on the cross is given for you for the remission of sins. And knowing that all was finished, Jesus died that we might live.

He did not remain dead, for do you not recall what He said? "Destroy this Temple and I will raise it again in three days" (John 2:). All of this is to say that the Son of God became man, conceived and born without sin, of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, that He might become Lord over sin; moreover, He suffered, died, and was buried that He might make satisfaction for you and pay what you owed, not with silver and gold but with His own precious Blood. All this in order to become your Lord. For He did none of these things for Himself, nor had He any need of them. Afterward He rose again from the dead, swallowed up and devoured death, and finally ascended into heaven and assume dominion at the right hand of the Father. The devil and all powers, therefore must be subject to Him and lie beneath His fee until finally, at the last day, He will completely divide and separate His Church from the wicked world, the devil, death and sin (LC).

Until that Day, the LORD calls his undershepherds to announce forgiveness in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit, and to tell the children of God that where there is forgiveness of sins there is also eternal life and salvation. Each pastor is called to take heed to himself and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made him a guardian, "to feed the church of the Lord which He obtained with His own Blood" (Acts 20:28).

What joy for God's messengers to declare the wonder of this Good News. Heaven's angels marvel at the Incarnation and proclaim their divine hymn of "Glory to God in the Highest" (Luke 2: ). The heralding angels joy and wonder as they delight "to look into these things" (1 Peter 1:12) from high above the manger and far beyond David's Star that announced the Birth of the Temple in Bethlehem. Faithful shepherds make haste to go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. Later these men returned to their flocks and their vocation as shepherds. As they have opportunity, they tell the Good News of the Savior's Birth. Those who hear this Word of joy to the world and ponder it will be found in Christ; that is in ... the Temple of God. Amen.