

**First Sunday of Christmas**  
**12.27.2020**  
**Luke 2:21-40**  
**Bishop Amy Current**

And just like that Luke's telling takes us from the manger to the temple and continues to orient us toward the cross.

One of my favorite things about Luke's Gospel is the focus on Jesus as the Savior from the get go. Even before Mary has digested the idea that she is going to have a baby, the angel Gabriel told her she would name her son, Jesus – the one who saves. Before Jesus' birth, Zechariah prophesied that God has raised up a mighty savior in David's house just as God had promised through the prophets, fulfilling God's covenant with Sarah and Abraham – and that Zechariah's own baby son, John, was the one who would prepare the way for Jesus. Then the angels to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid, the Savior has been born today!"

There is no question that this baby Jesus will be the one who will save the world, yet Mary and Joseph, young parents of the savior, proceed as normal with rituals of birth – circumcision, naming Jesus, and now purification in the temple with their offering of a couple meager birds.

Mary and Joseph gave their customary sacrifice at the temple, not knowing what would occur in the life and death of their son – who on the cross, redeemed the whole world, with his very life – so that salvation is free! God love you freely and abundantly enough to send Jesus to save you.

What joy and comfort for Anna and Simeon as they beheld this tiny savior. The one that they had been waiting for, longing for, praying for their whole lives – they were not spring chickens but Luke goes to great lengths to described these aged faithful ones. Simeon and Anna trusted the promise, the prophets, the stories of God's love for the world through the generations and now, through the Spirit's guidance, they saw the savior with their very own eyes – can you imagine?

Simeon held the baby Jesus in his hands and said to Mary, his mother, "This child is destined for the falling and rising of many... and a sword shall pierce your heart too." Jesus was born to reveal truth in our world, to teach love in our world, to fall to death, and then rise again to transform the world from death to life, to free us from ourselves, from sin, from anyone or anything that separates us from God. Jesus was born so that by his death and resurrection – death does not reign but life. God is life.

Simeon holds the savior in his arms and prepares to die as now his life is fulfilled. He has seen and held in his hands the promise of salvation. Can you imagine? This is the body of Christ given for you. This is the blood of Christ shed for you.

And then Anna praises God, speaking about Jesus, the Savior, the one who would redeem Jerusalem. The one who turns our hearts from hatred to love, the one who teaches us to love God and neighbor, and the stranger, the foreigner, the prisoner...and the downtrodden, the outcast, the poor, and the grieving, the lonely, the dying, ...and the blind, the lame, the deaf, the

lost, and the young, the old, and the in between, and the greedy, the smug, the rich, and the fearful, the isolated, the quarantined, the sick, the hungry, and the sinner ---

The one who came to earth to love the sinner. None of us are without sin and it is good news that the Savior – this baby Jesus – was born, lived, died, crucified, and risen Savior – was born to love us and die for us and then to set us free with forgiveness in abundance, with love leftover, with more than enough love to go around.

This is the Savior, Jesus, that Simeon held and that Anna proclaimed – Jesus, the baby, Christ the Lord – born to love us and set us free to love one another.... Born to love you. Born to set you free to love one another.

Merry Christmas!