

Sunday, December 28, 2008

First Sunday of Christmas

## INTRODUCTION

*In the psalm all the natural world praises God, including all humanity, male and female, young and old. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we speak of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## READINGS

Isaiah 61:10—62:3

Psalms 148

Galatians 4:4–7

Luke 2:22–40

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:10—62:3

*To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that the Lord's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.*

### Chapter 61

<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

### Chapter 62

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch.

<sup>2</sup>The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. <sup>3</sup>You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

## PSALM: Psalm 148

<sup>1</sup>Hallelujah! Praise the LORD <sup>1</sup>from the heavens;

praise him <sup>1</sup>in the heights.

<sup>2</sup>Praise him, all you an- <sup>1</sup>gels of his;

praise him, <sup>1</sup>all his host.

<sup>3</sup>Praise him, <sup>1</sup>sun and moon;

praise him, all you <sup>1</sup>shining stars.

<sup>4</sup>Praise him, heav- <sup>1</sup>en of heavens,

and you waters a- <sup>1</sup>bove the heavens.

<sup>5</sup>Let them praise the name <sup>1</sup>of the LORD;

for he commanded, and they <sup>1</sup>were created.

<sup>6</sup>He made them stand fast forev- <sup>1</sup>er and ever;

he gave them a law which shall not <sup>1</sup>pass away.

<sup>7</sup>Praise the LORD | from the earth,  
you sea monsters | and all deeps;  
<sup>8</sup>fire and hail, | snow and fog,  
tempestuous wind, do- | ing his will;  
<sup>9</sup>mountains | and all hills,  
fruit trees | and all cedars;  
<sup>10</sup>wild beasts | and all cattle,  
creeping things and | winged birds;  
<sup>11</sup>kings of the earth | and all peoples,  
princes and all rulers of the world;  
<sup>12</sup>young | men and maidens,  
old and | young together.  
<sup>13</sup>Let them praise the name | of the LORD,  
for his name only is exalted, his splendor is over | earth and heaven.  
<sup>14</sup>He has raised up strength for his people and praise for all his | loyal servants,  
the children of Israel, a people who are near him. | Hallelujah!

**SECOND READING: Galatians 4:4–7**

*Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as sons and daughters.*

<sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. <sup>6</sup>And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

**GOSPEL: Luke 2:22–40**

*Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.*

<sup>22</sup>When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, <sup>29</sup>"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

<sup>36</sup>There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup>When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own

town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

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