

Jesus Presented In The Temple

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Date: 26 December 2021

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[4 : 59] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. O come, let us adore him.

O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him.

[7 : 54] Praise the Lord. You may be seated. Good morning, church.

As we gather today, we know that there are many things we get to choose in life. We come now to our time of giving and we can think about all the choices we get to make. We can choose things like tea or coffee.

We can choose to be present. We can choose to be online. We can choose many things like a career path or the kind of car we want to drive.

But today, you are invited to choose this place. You're invited to choose this community of faith. You're invited to choose these people. And when you think of the choice you make in giving, the choice you make in giving also is a choice.

Choose generosity. Choose to share some of what God has given with you so that God might be blessed as you celebrate and honor what God has done by choosing to be with us in flesh, coming in the most vulnerable of ways.

[9 : 13] So let's prepare our gifts this morning. My dwelling place is God most high.

When you are living in the most vulnerable of ways. My refuge and my fortress. When plague and pestilence draw nigh, I'm hidden in His presence.

When terrors fall and arrows fly, His shield will be my safety. When stones across my pathway lie On angels' wings I'm carried My dwelling place is God most high A present help in danger I rest secure in love's pure light Beneath my Master's favor He freed me from the fowler's snare Where sin and shame had bound me Deceived I'd made my refuge there

Till fearless He came for me Wonderful, powerful My hope and my defender Mighty God, Emmanuel My dwelling place forever No huge interest ever That forever And ever Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 14] Thank you. Wonderful, powerful, my hope and my defender, mighty God, Emmanuel, my dwelling place forever.

My dwelling place forever. My dwelling place forever.

My dwelling place forever. My dwelling place forever.

My dwelling place forever. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[13 : 54] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Gracious and loving God, we thank you for all that you choose to do, that it all flows from you as a choice, that you choose to share with us, that you choose to give to us, that you chose to live among us as one of us.

As we come today, we also choose to give you these gifts as a sign that we have chosen you and choose this place and you as our home.

Please receive these gifts as they go to the honor and the glory of your name. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. Let's take our seats. So as we come to our prayer time today, it's an obvious thing that we must give thanks for what today and this season really means.

And with that, we also think of the theme that we're dealing with today, which is chosen home. And so with that, I invite you to open your hearts and join me in prayer. Loving God, we come today full to the brim, full with so much joy and love that we get to experience among family.

[15 : 32] So much excitement and happiness that was the result of a celebration yesterday. Lord, we also come today because we know at the heart of that celebration is the true source of joy, the true source of hope, the true source of peace, which is you.

You coming to us and being among us as child. And we think of what happens the day after. As families move forward, we pray that we don't lose this sense of joy.

We pray that we don't lose this sense of purpose. We pray that we don't lose this sense of worship and awe. That we continue to choose you.

We think of the young family headed toward the temple and Jesus being himself. Taking up the space, being himself. Inviting all those to understand what you had done.

Let our hearts stay full. Let our hearts stay in awe. Let our hearts stay full of wonder at the sight. And Lord, we come today and we give you thanks.

[16 : 50] Thanks for all those things that your birth means. Our salvation. Our peace. Our hope. Our joy. Our reason for celebrating.

All those things, Lord. As we come today. Let us continue to choose you. Each and every day. Each and every time.

In each and every way. Amen. Amen.

Good morning. Our scripture reading this morning is from the book of Luke, chapter 2, verses 25 through 33. Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout.

He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

[18 : 04] Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations, A light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You're hopeless, Charlie Brown.

Completely hopeless. Rats! You've been dumb before, Charlie Brown, but this time you really did it. What a treat!

I guess you were right, Linus.

[19 : 18] I shouldn't have picked this little tree. Everything I do turns into a disaster. I guess I really don't know what Christmas is all about. Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?

Sure, Charlie Brown. I can tell you what Christmas is all about. Lights, please.

And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them.

And the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not. For behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

[20 : 19] 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, goodwill toward men.

That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown. My husband and I were talking about this video and talking about the fact that in the last couple of years, there has been a lot of emphasis on the symbolism of Linus putting down his blanket.

Because Linus has his security blanket always. Any Charlie Brown that you see, Linus has his blanket. He drags it through the dust. He carries it with him all the places, all the time.

When he is proclaiming what Christmas is really about, he holds it, and then when it comes to Jesus being born, he puts it down.

Sometimes I think about this as what we in the last couple of years have learned to call a mic drop. You know, like, boom, that's the point.

[21 : 47] Boom, that's where it is. This is the story, and thanks be to God for it. We're still so close to Christmas, and we're so close to the end of the year, and the questions in the Scriptures might be, why don't we know more about Jesus as a little boy?

Why don't we know about his childhood? And the Scripture readings assigned for this morning was when Jesus was 12 and went into the temple, and I said, no, he can't be 12 already.

He was just born the day before yesterday. So this particular story of him going, being, not going, but being taken to the temple by his parents for circumcision, which then involves the naming ceremony, and all that is so important on the eighth day of a child's life in the Jewish culture.

Because a lot of people don't remember. Mary, Joseph, all the people, all the players in the story, they're all Jewish. There is no Christianity yet.

So they come to the temple, and who do they encounter but Simeon and Anna? And I chose to just include Simeon's story and his words this morning because both of them feel like they could be a little bit much.

[23 : 21] And I want you to listen to this version of the story. In Jerusalem, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in prayerful expectancy of help for Israel.

So let's think about that. This is, we're talking hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years since the beginning of the creation story in Genesis.

And all through all of those stories leading up to now, they've been waiting for the Messiah, waiting and watching. Because just like the New Testament believers thought that Jesus was coming back any minute, all of that Old Testament time, they thought the Savior would be coming.

So Simeon is blessed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died.

And he was very old. So he goes to the temple. And as the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to carry out the rituals of the law, Simeon took Jesus into his arms and blessed God.

[24 : 45] God, you can now release your servant. Release me in peace as you promised. With my own eyes, I have seen your salvation. It's now out in the open for everyone to see.

A God revealing light to the non-Jewish nations and of glory for your people of Israel. Jesus' father and mother were speechless with surprise at these words.

Simeon went on to bless them and went on to speak to Mary. It happened. It happened. What they'd been waiting for.

And we can look back into the Old Testament. The very first promise that the Messiah was going to be coming is in Genesis. And there are more promises over and over and over again.

And so it's no wonder that there's someone like Simeon, who happens to be Simeon, who has heard that he will see the Messiah before he dies.

[25 : 49] I wonder how many people had already died thinking that they were going to see the Messiah. But on this day, Simeon gets to see the Messiah. And he recognizes him, an eight-day-old baby.

How many of you have been around an eight-day-old baby ever? You don't look at them. You look at them and you think, oh, thanks be to God for this baby most of the time.

But we don't imagine seeing a Savior, the future. But here, Simeon and Anna both recognize that this is the culmination of the whole story.

The whole story. This is the time when the promises of Scripture are fulfilled. And this child is who the promises are fulfilled in.

When we think about promises fulfilled, when we think about Christmases and blessings, we think sometimes about the hard journey.

[27 : 00] The hard journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. The hard journey of 2021. The hard journey of 2020. The hard journey of parts of 2019.

I'll stop there. And we come to the end of another year. I tend to look back at the end of the year.

And I also tend to look ahead. Both. I can look back. And my hope is on a day like the 26th of December, that when we look back, that maybe we can pull in front of us the places where we saw the Messiah show up.

The places where we saw God present in our days and in our homes and in our small groups and in our worship and in something that's in nature, in the lights and the windows.

My hope is that we can look back even in a year of 2021 and remember that last year when it came to Advent and Christmas, we weren't singing.

[28 : 21] Susan Wasayowitz planned music that was reflective and beautiful, but not singing music because we weren't allowed to sing. We sang.

We sang Silent Night. We just sang Oh Come All Ye Faithful. We just heard a beautiful piece of music shared with us and hear about this dwelling place.

We look back over the year 2021 and we think, did God bless us? And I know that there are those among this gathered here and those who are watching online who might look back at 2021 and think of loss.

The loss of a person. The loss of the health of a person. The loss of predictability. The loss of safety.

So many different things. I had the opportunity to go back and look at a bunch of pictures from the church and of course if I had thought about this, well, Adrian might say six weeks ago, then we could watch and maybe that opportunity may not be past us.

[29 : 41] But pictures of children hunting for Easter eggs. Pictures of weddings. Weddings. Pictures of baptisms and baptisms and baptisms and more baptisms.

Pictures of weddings. Pictures of the youth out playing something I'd never seen before which was some kind of kickball that involved swimming pools and slip and slides.

And they did it right out here and I had never seen such a thing with slip and slides and pools and falling in and I'd never seen Adrian do that. Mr. or Miss Adrian.

Laughter. I was at my house and I was coming over anyway but laughter. Laughter. 2021 saw dumpsters of stuff that the church had accumulated go away.

Some to new homes. Some to new homes. Some to the dumpster and some to rummage sale. Now you might think, well, Pastor Kathy, is that really something that we should give thanks for?

[30 : 53] If you ask, I see somebody back there going. Laughter. Laughter. Because sometimes we need to look at who we are and what we have and what we're doing and say, what are we saving that for?

It's broken. Is somebody actually going to fix it? Is anybody going to use that? Do we have any purpose for this? Et cetera, et cetera. Why do we have six of these and ten of those?

And why do we have this at all? And our youth and our adults carried stuff after stuff after stuff to the dumpster.

And I can almost guarantee you that someone went over there and looked in the dumpster to make sure that all that stuff was to actually be thrown away. And, you know, I know people that it would have been going through it and, hey, look, go through it, find something, you take it home.

But don't leave it here. Don't put it back in the attic. The end of this year might be a time to put some things away.

[32 : 09] How many of you, if anybody, has put their Christmas tree to the curb already? Oh, thank you, Jesus. There's hope. Because do you know how long you're supposed to keep your Christmas tree up?

Anybody? Anybody? Epiphany. This begins the 12 days of Christmas. And people think, oh, the 12 days of Christmas are all about pipers piping and ladies dancing and, you know, all those things.

Partridges in a pear tree. Oh, I think that's my phone. I am so sorry. It'll stop. The 12 days of Christmas are the days from the 25th of December until the 6th of January.

That is the 12 days of Christmas and that's the season of Christmas. So technically, Christmas is not over until we get to the 6th of January.

And this year it happens and often does that it's in the middle of a week. So if the decorations at the church disappear before the 6th of January, you won't notice.

[33 : 23] Because they'll be here next week, right, Adrian? Yes, they'll be here next week. We, so often want to put Christmas away.

We want to box it up and get control and a sense of order back in our lives. And yes, some of that comes with putting Christmas ornaments away and either taking down the tree and putting it to the curb or recycling whatever it is you do, put it back in a bag or a box and put it in the basement or the attic.

How is it, though, that we hold on to the joy of the Christ child born, the child that changed the world forever and ever and ever?

And we put ourselves in a place where we're ready for whatever God brings. Because if whatever God brings is based on the beginning by the Savior of the world showing up, then the question is can we be ready?

Can we ready our hearts for what God has in mind for us as we live the last days of this year? All right.

[34 : 48] It's embarrassing. Okay. You know, there was a time when leaving the pulpit while preaching involved a three-year-old sneaking out of the nursery and showing up at the back of the sanctuary one row at a time coming forward and people are like, oh, look at him.

Isn't he so cute? And I'm like... And then we have a conversation. Staying or going? Staying or going? Because if you're going, go.

If you're staying, sit. So darn cute. I think at the end of every year is a time to decide.

It's a time to decide are we Christians of joy and celebration and life and light in the midst of it doesn't mean we don't have bad things happen.

It doesn't mean that we are immune to the sufferings of the world because we're not. But can we in the midst of that be people of, oh, come all ye faithful, joy to the world, oh, come, oh, come Emmanuel, Christ the Lord is risen today, which I realize is Easter, but it's all the same.

[36 : 15] can we be people of joy, of belief, of faith in the future? Can we look at that which is behind us, whatever that is, in 2021, 2020, whatever year you want, can we look at that which is behind us and thank God for what we've been given and mourn those we have lost and feel a longing for things that felt safe and good and joyful but are no more?

Can we step into whatever it is that God has in mind because, you see, people like Simeon and Anna, they received everything they ever needed when Christ was born.

It doesn't say they died the next minute. They just received what it was they'd been waiting for. So the question is, did we, do we, and will we?

Will we recognize Christ in the faces of our brothers and sisters? Will we recognize that no matter how many times, whether it's your child or at my current house, a grand puppy who if she could talk would be going, mom, mom, mom, mom, mom, mom, mom, mom, mom, mom, mom.

That in the midst of that, I can look into Piper's face and in between, you're going to go to your crate, I see how much she adores me and I throw the toy one more time.

[38 : 10] And I actually probably will say yes to taking her again. I have a band-aid on my finger, yes, I'll take her again. We don't always get to choose what the future holds.

In fact, we just simply don't. No matter what TV or the internet or anybody tells you about all the steps in a new year, how about the last days of this year don't be about.

I want to be different, you want to be different, we're going to be this, we're going to be that, we're going to do this, how about the last days of this year we say, praise the Lord, Jesus was born, let the earth rejoice and let us give thanks for the God who made us and the God who holds our woundedness and the God who holds our loved ones who are in pain and the God who holds our children and grandchildren is real, made known in Jesus Christ and for that, all we can do is thank you, Lord.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 21] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. that all humanity is beloved, and called us to care for each one as beloved. The grown Jesus gathered people around tables and showed them their radiance.

[42 : 11] Jesus gathers us around this table and says, this bread and this cup are my life and light for you.

And because I shine in you, let your light shine in the world. And so we offer ourselves in union with Christ's offering of salvation.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts. Transform us into the light of your love for all and make us one in you.

Thanks and praise be to the creator, redeemer, and sustainer. Amen. Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst. Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed.

[43 : 13] And now let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Those serving today, please come forward.

[44 : 47] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[46 : 23] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[50 : 43] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. I sometimes wake up in the morning on my own.

This morning the alarm woke me up, but I wasn't quite ready to get up, so I found myself scrolling through family photos of everyone at Christmas, and I love to do that.

But I ran across, I think it was Carolyn Patterson's granddaughter, and in this video, just the joy of a child. She's opening her gift, and the exclamation was, It's a baby!

So I guess for us, may we all feel that same joy in the gift that's been given to us. So I invite you to stand as we sing our closing song, Go Tell It on the Mountain. Go Tell It on the Mountain, over the hills and everywhere.

[52 : 01] Go Tell It on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.

Go Tell It on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born. Go Tell It on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go Tell It on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.

Go Tell It on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

As shepherds fit and trembled, when low above the earth, Rang out the earth. Rang out the angel chorus, that hailed the Savior's birth.

Go Tell It on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go Tell It on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger, the humble Christ was born.

[53 : 31] And God sent us salvation, that blessed Christmas morn.

Go Tell It on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go Tell It on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

Go Tell It. Every time you look at someone with love, with acceptance, with thoughts gone about what's been done, what's in the past, every time you look and welcome someone into your space, think of it as welcoming them into the family of God, where all are welcome.

The news is not mine, it's God's news. So go tell it on the mountain, Jesus Christ is born for you. Blanket drop. Amen.

USB plug. You are definitely in the Church ofhart... Pen■ read the sediment of thehalef■■■■, DOM Bible verse 5.

[55 : 14] you Thank you.

Thank you.