

## Sermon - Dec. 27, 2020

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40 - *English Standard Version*

**22** And 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 **23** (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) **24** and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” **25** Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. **26** And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. **27** And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, **28** he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

**29** “Lord, now you are letting your servant<sup>[a]</sup> depart in peace,

according to your word;

**30** for my eyes have seen your salvation

**31** that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

**32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

and for glory to your people Israel.”

**33** And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. **34** And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed **35** (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

**36** And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, **37** and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.<sup>[b]</sup> She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. **38** And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

**39** And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. **40** And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

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Puppies are cute, but I don't gush over them. They have value to me. I think they are cool and I will even pick one up and play with them for a little while, because I like all of God's creatures. And I will be honest and tell you that you certainly have a cute puppy, because they *are* -- but in the end I don't want one for my own.

I like all kinds of animals, big and little. My sister-in-law took in a baby squirrel as a rescue and yes, he was amazingly cute and fun to hold, and it was a thrill to hold him and pet him. But, again I would not want one for my own.

Babies, too, are kind of like that. And it's different when the infant is your own. But, even then, I was quite anxious for them to get to be children. I couldn't wait for the day when they could get into the car and buckle themselves into the seat. I value infants. I like children.

I've met a surprising number of young adults, young women, who are not at all interested in having children or being around them.

It's that idea of not wanting to be around them that made me wonder about the central message of the Christmas Story...

*For born unto YOU this day in the City of David is a Savior, who is the Christ, our Lord. For unto US a child is born, unto US a Son is given. And the government shall be upon His shoulders and he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace.*

What does that message mean to people who aren't moved by the birth of an infant? The miracle of the birth of a Child... and it is a miracle, truly. It happens so commonly that we overlook the mechanics of it, the mathematical amazement of bits of genome recombining into a person. A new person. Given the gift of life and spirit. Filled with awesome potential. A baby is full of potential.

We invest in our children our hopes and dreams for them. They are vessels of future successes.

This Child we celebrate today is the Christ Child, filled with the promise of God, and His future is revealed at his birth. THIS Child is the CHRIST. He who IS... even now, at His birth... KING of Kings and Lord of Lords. His dominion is forever and ever.

Notice the way the child is introduced to us... US... this is not the infant born to Mary only. This infant is Born TO US. Born FOR US. UNTO US a Child is born, a Son is given.... This is NOT a private Child given into a single family unit, Mary's Child, Joseph's Ward. The Scripture shares this birth with all the world.

If you read the genealogies in the Bible as we did this last week at 30 Minute Church, you see the infants who are born to Fathers... Enoch and Noah, to families and clans, Israel and David... But THIS Child is born to US. Amazing.

The Messiah does not come to us out of the dark mysterious void, simply showing up fully grown and announcing he is HERE. He comes HUMBLE and LOWLY

as an infant we can approach and adore. But this birth is heralded by choirs of angels, by prophets and Magi so we can know this Child is not in any way ordinary... He is The Mighty God Himself incarnated... enfleshed in our humanity. And in His coming as an infant, He must rely 100% on his parents to protect Him. To be under the authority of a human mother and the guardianship of a foster father. They must be obedient to the warnings of God the Father, to flee to Egypt when King Herod feels threatened and seeks the life of the infant king.

Jesus will grow to manhood, and we know where He came from and where He is going and what He is doing because it was foretold to us... And that is why this infant, born to us, is a big deal and we should pay attention to it. In part, because, as believers in the story of humanity's salvation... the world needs us to grow up and grow in faith and become responsible adults who care for infants and protect them and help them to grow into maturity.

You know the story about a child who refuses to grow up and take on the role of adulthood and the sacrifices that are required to be a responsible, selfless adult. Peter Pan... the magic boy who refuses to grow up. He is magic because he is a child, because children are magical.

Children are filled with potential; they can be anything. And Peter Pan doesn't want to give that up? Why? His only adult role model is Captain Hook, a mean old man with a hook for a hand, who is being chased by the dragon of chaos with a clock in his stomach. As you recall, the crocodile already has a piece of him. That's what happens as you get older... time has a piece of you, it has a taste for you and eventually it's going to eat you. Hook is in mortal fear of this and behaves like a tyrant. Peter looks at this and says to himself, 'if this is what it means to grow up, the heck with that; I'll stay a child.' The problem is you can't stay in Neverland because it isn't real. Peter Pan sacrifices any real relationships, especially with a woman, except Tinkerbell who isn't real either, and is mostly built on his fantasies. (We can't see her, and the only way to make her alive is to believe in her.) Wendy, on the other hand, IS real. She has conservative middle class ambitions; she wants to grow up, have kids and have a life. She accepts her mortality and responsibilities. She chooses to go home and live in the real world with real consequences. That takes sacrifice. To give up the potential of fantasy for the hard reality of the FRAME of structure... I could be anything... I am choosing to be THIS...

Life is a choice, a series of choices. You can't go on being a child forever. Peter Pan can live in a world where time can stop. WE do not live in a world where things go on forever without changing.

At least we do not live there YET. Time has a piece of us. And eventually time will swallow us up.

But we have a Child born to US... a Magic Child, if you will... but not made up of imagination.

This Child grows up to be our Savior. He matures and makes the choice to be responsible and make the greatest of all sacrifices. It is one that will allow us to become magical (holy) like Him and live in a world that never ends.

While we are here in this world... let us be mature in our faith, and, likewise, become people who are responsible and sacrificial. Amen.