

Christmas 1

December 27, 2026 (Year B)



*When Mary heard such things spoken first by the angels,
then shepherds, and now by Simeon, she wondered
greatly. Wonderful indeed, it was that such lowly
and despised folk as Joseph and Mary
should be the parents of such a Child!*

– Martin Luther –

Martin Luther's Christmas Book

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Isaiah 61:10–62:3

Marriages that are based in faith exemplify the way two people share an intimate covenantal relationship for life. In this passage of Scripture, the prophet uses this as a way to describe God's relationship with us. Jesus used similar imagery of bride and groom to describe to his followers what the kingdom was like (Matthew 9, Mark 2, and Luke 5).

- *In what ways is God's love for his people like a bridegroom preparing to marry his lovely bride?*
- *Why do you suppose the Scriptures are filled with this sort of marriage imagery? What does it say about God? What does it say about the sanctity of marriage from God's perspective?*

Moving on to chapter 62, the prophet says: "For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent." Isaiah declares that soon the nations would see how precious God's people were to him as he restored them to their homeland in Jerusalem. This return from exile would be a time when all the peoples of the world would see the glory of the Lord and the righteousness of his people.

- *In what way(s) was this righteousness not something the people had earned, but one that was conferred upon them because of God's love and forgiveness?*
- *What words in this poetic passage capture your attention? What do such phrases as "crown of beauty" and "royal diadem" tell you about God's love for you?*

Psalms 111

This psalm is a wonderful expression of faith in the goodness of God and his power to make things right. God is described as purposeful and active, not only at work in the universe as a whole, but in our individual lives as his people.

- *How would you describe the emotions expressed in this psalm? When would the words of a psalm like this be important for you to hear?*

For many, this psalm brings up the age-old question of theodicy — that is, "If God is so good, why does he allow evil to exist?" It is a natural question to wonder, especially when evil and suffering touch our lives in devastating ways. As Martin Luther pointed out, God's ways are often "hidden under the form of opposites." When we are weak, He is strong. When we are in the midst of death, God brings about life.

- *Why is the question of theodicy always with us in this world? Is there a time when our questions will be answered? Or will there simply come a time when we no longer need to ask?*

- *How might the words of this psalm give us strength in the face of what we cannot understand? In what sense does God's Word always have the "last word"?*

Galatians 4:4–7

Paul asserted that those who are children are no different than those who are slaves. They have limited rights and resources of their own, being under the care and instruction of managers, teachers, and supervisors. In terms of the inheritance, they may "own" everything, but they have no say in matters.

- *In acknowledging that children are subject to others, does that necessarily mean they are not loved?*

This reality is the same for us who are born under the law. We were like minor children before Christ came and redeemed us. Now with this new reality of our life in Christ, we have come of age. We are no longer slaves to the law but have been granted our inheritance as sons and daughters of the king, free to live in Him who redeemed us.

- *Apart from faith in Christ, why is it that we do not have any rights of our own? In what sense does faith alone inherit the promise?*

Luke 2:22–40

Understanding this text requires some knowledge of the law of Moses. Two different Old Testament laws are being cited here: 1) The sacrifice of redemption for firstborn males (Exodus 13:1–16) and 2) The purification of a woman after childbirth (Leviticus 12:1–12). Both these acts show the obedience of Mary and Joseph to the law of Moses and were sacrifices made according to the old covenant.

- *Some Evangelical Protestants who deny infant baptism like to claim "we dedicate infants, like they did in the Bible." Is their practice really the same as what's happening here, or is it something quite different? Why?*
- *Roman Catholics claim that Mary was without sin. Does this text from Luke support that claim? Explain.*

Amazingly, a man named Simeon had been waiting for many years. He had received from the Holy Spirit a message that he would not die until he saw the Lord's Messiah. Likewise, Anna revealed this same promise was being fulfilled.

- *In what ways does God always offer more than one witness to his actions? Why does he do this?*
- *What was Simeon referring to in his prophetic words to Mary (verse 35)? How does this set the stage for Jesus' mission?*