

## The Temple of God is Born

Luke 2:10-18

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri

December 24, 2016 – The Eve of Christmas



In the name of the Father, and of † the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. On this holy night and in this holy place you and I are once again blessed to join with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven basking in the gracious presence of the Lord God Almighty as we rejoice in the Incarnation of His Son. This celebration takes place throughout the world on this most holy night just as it did when a tiny congregation first assembled around the manger in the little town of Bethlehem where Jesus, “The Temple of God,” was born.

Now it may sound strange to talk this way, for most people think of temples as something which is built and not born. For instance, Solomon was the one who built the first Temple of God based solely upon a design revealed to Him in God’s Word. And even though that Temple was destroyed, it was later replaced by another which took forty-six years to build. Those were temples fashioned from stone, wood and fabric by the agency of human hands according to the divine design God revealed to those who built them. The Temple we’re talking about is the Temple of God which was born, not made – the Temple we know as Son of God and Son of Man.

At the moment of Christ’s conception, His divine and human natures came together, never to be separated again. At that instant this Temple became very God of very God, yet was also true man. Nine months later this Temple in which all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell bodily was born. Behold this tiny Infant lying in the manger, and consider whether you love Him – for is this not supposed to be the season of love? Of course you love Him. You love Him very much. Indeed, doesn’t everyone love a baby, especially this One? But, do you love Him above all others – more than mother or father, husband or wife, son or daughter, or even more than you love yourself? That’s not too likely, is it? And what about trust? Do you trust Him? Well, first you need to know what that means. After all, how does one put their trust in a newborn infant? What is a tiny baby

capable of doing that would cause someone to trust Him? But still the question remains put forth by Holy Scripture: Do you trust Him above all others? Again, that’s not very likely. And finally, do you fear Him? Well, who would be afraid of a baby? A baby can’t hurt anyone. But notice, I didn’t ask if you were afraid of Him; only whether or not you fear Him.

By now I suspect you know where I’m going with all this – because this is all First Commandment language, isn’t it? If this Baby is “Christ the Lord” – and He is – then He is also the One Who was known as “I AM” even before Abraham was born – the very same God who spoke from heaven saying: “I AM the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods.” And as the explanation of the First Commandment from the *Small Catechism* teaches us, you are to fear, love and trust in Him above all things. So this Commandment requires true faith and confidence of the heart in the one true God – and insists that you cling to Him alone as Lord.

But hearing these words is likely to make you feel more than just a little uncomfortable, for we all know that our hearts have not always clung to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as we ought. Truth be known, our words and deeds have borne only fruit such as that which comes from an unclean heart. Knowing this, what then are you to do with this Temple of God recently born, now sleeping in a manger? Is He a real threat to your well being, or is He somewhat more manageable – a Baby kept at arm’s length, approached on the first day of Christmas, but then left in His cradle much as we might stow the doll and the manger used in the Children’s Christmas program until it’s needed again next year?

This Babe who was held in the arms of Mary and entrusted to the care of Joseph, is the very Temple of God – the Lord Almighty. But why was He conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary? And what has He come to

accomplish? It certainly wasn't to put check marks on the blackboard behind your name every time you're bad – or to find out whether you've been naughty or nice. The One True God who came as a Baby in Bethlehem is no dictator requiring you to wear an "I Love Jesus" tee shirt or jewelry to show the world what a good Christian you are. Our Lord and Savior wasn't born to give you a book on the eleven steps to God-pleasing parenting, nine ways to be a better spouse, or ten things you can do as a Christian when you retire. In short, the Incarnation of the Son of God did not take place to help you become a good person, or yes, even a better person.

Hear again the words of the Christmas Angel as he announces to the shepherds the reason for this holy birth: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you Good Tidings of great joy which will be for all the people. For unto you this day, in the city of David, a Savior is born Who is Christ the Lord." Christ the Lord was born to be the Savior of the world – to save you from yourself, your sin and your sinning. He came because you were naughty and not nice – because you have broken every single one of His Commandments, because you have not been a God-pleasing parent, a good spouse, or because your retirement years have been filled not with serving God and your neighbor, but with sloth, pride, complacency and complaining.

Do you remember what the angel told Mary? He told her that she was to name her Child Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. The name, Jesus, means "Savior." And saving is what God sent Jesus to do. Saving is why Jesus was born. At the age of eight days He was circumcised and first shed His blood to fulfill the Law. Later He touched the water of the world, thus sanctifying its use in Baptizing infant, elderly and all nations in between for the forgiveness of their sins. In His life He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin. Even now He prepares His Table before us – yes, even in the midst of this sin-filled fallen world where we live – and on this table He gives us Manna from heaven and feeds those who are belong to Him with His very own body and blood once born of Mary. He is the Good Wine of the wedding feast, and it's His sin-atonement blood which was shed on the cross for you in His death, so that you might have life in His name.

But Jesus didn't remain dead, did He? Do you recall the words He spoke to His followers before His death? "Destroy this Temple," He said, "and I will raise it again in three days." All this is to say that the Son of God became Man and was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin so that He might be Lord over sin – your sin and mine. Moreover He suffered, died, and was buried so that He might make satisfaction and pay the debt you owed to God – not with silver and gold but with His own precious Blood. And all this He did not for Himself, but for you. Then He rose again from the dead, swallowed up death, and ascended into heaven where He assumed His proper place at the right hand of the Father. Now the devil and every evil power are subject to Him and lie beneath His feet until finally, on the Last Day, He will completely separate His Church from this wicked world, the devil, sin and death.

Until that Day arrives, however, the Lord will continue to call his undershepherds, His pastors, to announce forgiveness in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – and to boldly proclaim that where there is forgiveness of sins there also is eternal life and salvation. Each pastor has been called to take heed to himself and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made him an overseer – to feed the Church of the Lord which He obtained with His own Blood. What great joy there is for God's messengers – yes, and for all who trust in this Temple of God who is born – to be able to declare the wonder of this Good News. Heaven's angels marvel at the Incarnation and proclaim their divine hymn of "Glory to God in the Highest." The heralding angels joy and wonder as they delight "to look into these things" from high above the manger and far beyond David's Star as it announces the Birth of the Temple in Bethlehem. Faithful shepherds make haste to go and see this marvelous thing that has happened – and then later return to their flocks and vocation as shepherds – where as they would be given the opportunity to tell the Good News of this Savior's Birth to whomever God placed in their path. Those who hear this Word of joy to the world and ponder it in their hearts will be found in Christ. They will be found always in the Temple of God, the home of God's elect. In the name of the Father, and of † the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.