BIBLE STUDY
January 29-30, 2025

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD
Malachi 3: 1-4
Luke 2: 22-40
Hebrews 2: 14-18

1. **Malachi 3: 1-4**
   - Malachi, one of the minor prophets, wrote after the people had returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. His writings reflect the religious state of the times. The people have grown indifferent and careless in their observance of the covenant. They do not pay tithes, offer defective goods as sacrifice, divorce and remarry those who worship other gods, and take advantage of workers and the poor. The priests are just as bad and condone and collaborate with the people in their religious indifference. The prophet condemns the wrongdoing, calls for reform, but also warns of God's judgement and punishment.
   - **3: 1**: It is unknown who exactly the messenger is. Matthew in his Gospel uses this verse to identify the ministry of John the Baptist. After the messenger, the Lord will come to the temple without warning. People will be caught off guard and unprepared.
   - 3: 2: He will come as a judge. No one will be able to escape his judgment. His presence will be like fire that purifies and bleach that whitens.
   - 3: 3: He will remove the dross and grime that have distorted his people just as a refiner cleans metal. He will purify the priests so that they can offer sacrifices with a proper attitude and practice.
   - 3:4: After this reform, the sacrifices that are made will be pleasing to the Lord as they were before. A sacrifice is acceptable to the Lord when it is offered by a person who is in right relationship with God and neighbor. The disposition and moral behavior of the one offering makes the sacrifice acceptable.
2. **Luke 2: 22-40**
   - The background for this story is to be found in Leviticus 12: 2-8 and Exodus 13: 2, 12). In Leviticus, a woman who gives birth to a boy is ritually unclean for 40 days. After 40 days, she offers a year-old lamb and a turtle dove or young pigeon to be purified. If she is unable to afford that, she offers two turtledoves or two pigeons. Mary offers the latter and so suggests that she and Joseph were of limited means. Their completion of this ritual shows Joseph and Mary to be observant of the Law just as Zachariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, and Ana. The first two chapters of Luke describes men and women who were holy and faithful in their religious life.
   - Exodus 13: 2, 12 says that a first-born son must be consecrated to the Lord. Joep and Mary present the Child Jesus in observance of the Law. The law does not say that it takes place in Jerusalem, but Luke is making a connection between Jesus' presentation and the presentation of Samuel by Hannah in the temple (1 Samuel 1: 24-28).

- V. 22: Joseph and Mary fulfill all the requirements of the law.
- V. 23: Luke gives the citation of the law in Leviticus.
- V. 24: Jospeh and Mary offer the offering of a poor couple.
- V. 25: Luke populates these first wo chapters with men and women who exemplify the best of Jewish piety and observance. “The consolation of Israel” echoes Isaiah 40: Comfort, Comfort, my people.
- V. 26: The Spirit has promised him that he will live to see the Messiah.
- V. 27: Simeon enters the temple while Mary and Joseph bring the child Jesus into the temple.
- V. 28: Even without Jesus, Mary, and Joseph appearing any different from the other sin temple, Simeon perceives by the gift of the Spirit that this child is the Messiah.
- Vv: 29-32: Simeon prays a canticle or religious song that is known as the Nunc Dimittis. It is prayed each night in the Night Prayer of the church. Simeon is content to let the Lord take him because his hope has been fulfilled. He has seen the salvation God promised with his own eyes. God had done this for all to see. Jesus will be a light for all nations and all people. He will be the glory of Israel because he is the vindication of Isarel’s long wait for salvation.
- V. 33: Mary and Joseph do not know what to think about this.
- V. 34: Simeon prophesizes to Mary that Jesus will bring about a decisive moment n Isarel when everybody will have to choose and show their true colors.
- V. 35: The rejection and death that Jesus will suffer because of this will cause great sorrow and pain to Mary.
- V. 36-38: Anna has lived in the temple as a widow for a long time, fasting and praying. She, too, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. She speaks to everyone about Jesus.
- V. 39: The holy family returns to Nazareth
- V. 40: Jesus grows up in Nazareth. He is full of wisdom and strength. God’s favor is upon him.

3. **Hebrews 2: 14-18**
   - The author of the letter to the Hebrews is presenting an argument to the people that they should not have any less faith in Jesus as Son f God because he was human like us and suffered death.
   - V. 14: Since we are human, Jesus, our Savior, had to be human to destroy sin and death. Jesus’ becoming human like us was how he could defeat the devil who holds the power of death.
   - V. 15: Jesus’ taking on of our humanity---bonding himself with us—made it possible for him to free us from death that enslaves us to fear.
   - V. 16: Jesus was not the savior of angels, but of human beings. So, he had to share our human nature.
   - V. 17: He became like us in all things so that he could be a faithful high priest for us.

- V. 18: Jesus went through the same temptations that we do. Therefore, he understands us and what we struggle with. Therefore, he can help us. He can truly be a Savior.