

Sermon for December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

READINGS

Isaiah 11:1-5

- 1** There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.  
**2** And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.  
**3** And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,  
**4** but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
**5** Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Psalms 89:1-8

- 1** I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever;  
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.  
**2** For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever;  
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness."  
**3** You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one;  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
**4** 'I will establish your offspring forever,  
and build your throne for all generations.'" *Selah*  
**5** Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,  
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!  
**6** For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?  
Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD,  
**7** a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,  
and awesome above all who are around him?  
**8** O LORD God of hosts,  
who is mighty as you are, O LORD,  
with your faithfulness all around you?

Galatians 4:1-7

**1** I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, **2** but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. **3** In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. **4** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. **6** And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" **7** So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Luke 2:22-35

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 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.”

Our text for meditation this First Sunday after Christmas is on our Epistle reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Christmas as Devotional Season**

First, let me say that I hope you had a wonderful Christmas celebration – and that you are *still* celebrating as we approach the end of the year. Certainly the ornaments get stored in the attic, the carols are no longer heard in the stores and we have received our presents, but Christmas isn't *done*. The devotions must continue. Christ being born ought to be more important to us, not just the subject of a holiday but something we think of often. After all, the Gospel properly begins with the Incarnation, just as St. Paul teaches us here. If Jesus had not been born under the Law, then His perfect obedience to it would not be present and the Law would never have been fulfilled. If the Law had not been fulfilled by His perfect obedience, then He never would have made satisfaction for our sins on the Cross.

I believe this is why Christmas is a twelve say *season*, and not just a single day. We celebrate that God became a man, living under all the requirements that we have had to live under – yet never once falling into sin. So during the Advent season we remember the anticipation of those who awaited His Arrival, and we sympathize with those Old Testament saints, for we too await His Return. But during the season of *Christmas*, we do well to remember His perfect obedience and human life.

### **The Perfect Obedience of Christ**

My friends, we ought to be more impressed that Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life. And not only a sinless life, but a sinless life under the Mosaic code, where far stricter requirements were placed upon men! Imagine the humility necessary to go from the great Throne Room in Heaven into a dirty manger smelling strongly of straw and manure, and then to add getting *circumcised* on top of it! This was in observance of the very Law that Christ Himself delivered to the children of Israel fourteen hundred years prior to His Birth, and here He was now experiencing all the difficulties that came with it.

We must not forget that He grew up in accordance with His human nature. He went through puberty, and the doldrums of learning both at school and the carpentry trade of St. Joseph; yet not once did He yield to the youthful temptation to cause mischief or grieve His parents. Our Lord experienced teething and growing pains, and He probably went through having a cold, getting knicked or scraped when tripping on a rock, yet never once did He harbor a bad attitude or take our Lord's Name in vain in response to it. He submitted Himself for education from the rabbinic nitwits who came up with the distortions of the pharisees, and yet He did not disrupt the class. As any parent can tell you, rebellion is bound up in the heart of our children, so this must have been befuddling to Joseph and Mary as they did their best to raise Him.

Even as He entered manhood, He paid taxes, made the required offerings, and continued His labor in carpentry before beginning His ministry. He never once failed to maintain self-control whenever a customer was being unreasonable. He did not price gouge or con anyone. And though He never took an earthly wife, He never submitted to any lustful temptations. Long before the devil tempted Him in the wilderness,<sup>1</sup> our Savior demonstrated an unshakeable obedience to the Law that none of us can even get close to matching, and He did it *for us*.

We cannot go one day without sinning. For that matter, I doubt that even the strictest, holiest men on earth could even make it one *hour* without sinning. As you are reading or hearing this homily, it is likely that some sinful thought has crossed your mind, and yes even that counts. Christ had no evil thoughts – we do every few minutes. We covet, we lust, we hate, we have sinful imaginations, and that is just considering the sin in our hearts alone. We must be honest with ourselves, and remember how *hard* it is to stay away from temptation. Meanwhile, Jesus did not sin even once for all thirty and three years of His earthly sojourn, even when He had starved in the desert for forty days.

### Why the Obedience?

This raises the question: why did He do this? It was possible (at least in theory) for Christ to have descended from the heavens, or just arrive out of the ether to save us. For that matter, He could have saved us by some decree of amnesty without having gone to the Cross. The reason He did not do so was the Law. My friends, God established the Ten Commandments, or what we call the Law, as the expression of His Will for all who live in this earth. It is a tutor for everyone, but as St. Paul says it was also a guardian which treated us all like slaves. It constantly accuses, constantly makes demands, and always threatens us with the destruction that our sins merit.

When St. Paul says we were enslaved to the “elementary principles of the world,” he means the Law:<sup>2</sup> it is elementary because it applies to all humanity whether Jew or Gentile,<sup>3</sup> and it is the standard for our behavior in this world. Though it comes from God Himself, the Law becomes death to us. Though it tells us how we can live eternally, the Commandments which promise that life do nothing to help us get there, and so we are sentenced to die as sinners.<sup>4</sup> Sin takes advantage of our helplessness, making it so that before Christ the Law functioned almost solely as our executioner – after a long and painful life of enslavement.<sup>5</sup>

So the Law tells us that it shall not help us, only make demands and accusations. The only way for a man to live forever despite the curse of death is to follow it fully. No one other than Christ has ever done anything like that. With His life, He satisfied every last demand of every single Commandment, and He did so *perfectly* on our behalf for thirty three years. If any man be found to belong to Christ through faith, then he is counted as having Christ's righteousness; God looks at the

---

1 Matthew 4:1-11

2 Luther discusses this in his *Commentary on Galatians*: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1549/1549-h/1549-h.htm#link2HCH0004>

3 Romans 2:14-15

4 Romans 7:10

5 1 Corinthians 15:56

believer and sees only the perfect obedience of our Savior, thus making us justified (that is, declared righteous) by faith in Him.

That is the secret to eternal life. Because of our sins, we die. Because of Christ's sinlessness, whoever believes in Him shall live forever. If you are Baptized into Christ, then you are no longer under the cruel taskmaster that says you deserve hell. This is all because, from birth until His Resurrection, our Savior was perfect in all of His works, words and ways. Where we have sinned in thought, word and deed, He excelled beyond perfection.

### **Slaves and Heirs**

Now you may be wondering, "Why then do we still have to obey these Commandments if Jesus already did for us?" Ah, that is because you have been *adopted*. No longer a slave, but still treated like a servant because you are part of the household. St. Paul contrasts the slave to the heir. The slave has no inheritance and no future; he will be a slave until he perishes. An heir on the other hand has an inheritance, but he must serve like a slave until he is old enough to receive what is promised to him. Before we were Christians, the Law bore heavily on our hearts and accused us while also demanding that we do the right thing at all times. But as believers the Law is no longer an enemy that condemns, but a friend that guides. Moses stops pointing his bony finger at our sins, and begins pointing the way in which we ought to walk while awaiting the fullness of our redemption in Christ.

Because Jesus lives a perfectly sinless life, that is exactly how the Law treated Him. After all, He is the heir of all things, receiving all power and authority for having redeemed us. Being united to Him then, we too find ourselves treated as sons. We have a great inheritance before us, an eternal life without having to worry about requirements, commands, and ethical strictures breathing down our necks all the time. When we have been Resurrected, we shall never hear another threat ever again! But in the meantime, let us rejoice and be cheerful in our Christian service, being zealous for good works the same way our Savior was here on earth.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.