

St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland
Second Sunday of Christmas, January 3, 2021

Welcome and Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 110, stanzas 1 and 4

The snow lay on the ground

Opening Sentence: The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

Confession

*Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep,
we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,
we have offended against thy holy laws,
we have left undone those things which we ought to have done,
and have done those things which we ought not to have done.
But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
spare thou those who confess their faults,
restore thou those who are penitent,
according to thy promises declared unto mankind
in Christ Jesus our Lord;
and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,
to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.*

Absolution

The Almighty and merciful Lord grant you absolution and remission of all your sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Invitation to Venite and Psalm

O Lord, open thou our lips,
And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

The Venite - seated

*O come, let us sing unto the Lord;
let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are all the corners of the earth,
and the strength of the hills is his also.*

*The sea is his and he made it,
and his hands prepared the dry land.
O come, let us worship and fall down
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For he is the Lord our God,
and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth,
and with righteousness to judge the world and the peoples with his truth.*

Psalm 84 – see lesson insert

First Lesson – Jeremiah 31:7-14- see lesson insert

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a - see lesson insert

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Hymn 112, stanzas 1 and 4

In the bleak midwinter

The Gospel - Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23 - see lesson insert

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

The Apostles' Creed - standing

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;*

*And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer - seated

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

Suffrages - seated

O Lord, show thy mercy upon us;
And grant us thy salvation.
Endue thy ministers with righteousness;
And make thy chosen people joyful.
Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
For only in thee can we live in safety.
Lord, keep this nation under thy care;
And guide us in the way of justice and truth.
Let thy way be known upon earth;
Thy saving health among all nations.
Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.
Create in us clean hearts, O God;
And sustain us with thy Holy Spirit.

Collects for Sundays, the Second Sunday of Christmas, and Families

O God, who makes us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Grant us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the days to come may be spent in your favor, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

O Lord, heavenly Father, let the words of Christ dwell in our hearts, so that we may teach and guide our family, through our words and deeds, to the saving knowledge of Your everlasting kingdom. Help us to set an example for those we love, mindful that this is what You expect from us and for them. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

The General Thanksgiving

*Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants
do give thee most humble and hearty thanks
for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men.
We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for thine inestimable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies,
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful;
and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up our selves to thy service,
and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.*

Announcements and America

*My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light;
Protect us by thy might, great God, our King.*

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication unto thee, and hast promised through thy well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the midst of them. Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Hymn 102, stanzas 1 and 2

Once in royal David's city

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia.

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 2nd Sunday of Christmas, January 3, 2021.

You will note that for our gospel today there are three options. Matthew or Luke or Matthew again. Why do you suppose the editors gave us a choice? That rarely happens. So, why today?

Let's assume that the editors expected us to read aloud just one, but perhaps investigate all three. And the editors were right. We have read just one, but we're going to investigate all three. And, what do we find when we do so?

Here's my conclusion. All three lessons have to do with parenting. A very tough job. Not news to you all but rather confirmation of what you know to be true. And remember that one doesn't have to be a biological parent to help raise a child. Aunts and uncles, friends, neighbors, teachers, authors, and, by design, Godparents.

Put yourself in the place of Mary and Joseph. In the first Matthew passage (**Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23**), Mom and Dad have to travel to Egypt to escape King Herod who is threatened by the new born. When Herod dies, Mom and Dad then travel back to Israel, only to find that another king is also threatened by the child. So, Mom and Dad have to move again, this time to Galilee and a town called Nazareth. Three moves in a matter of a few years is tough enough in favorable circumstances, but really tough when there is a threat.

In the passage from Luke (**Luke 2:41-52**), Mom and Dad are dealing with an almost teenager, who has a mind of his own. "When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it." So, they look for him, and find him in the Temple engaging the elders. They confront their son, only to have their son reply "Why are you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" We're not told what Joseph and Mary said to their 12 year old son, but it seemed to work. He did return home to Nazareth with them and was "obedient."

The third passage – another from Matthew (**Matthew 2:1-2**) – is about the Wise Men following the star to where the future "king of the Jews" was to be born. King Herod told the Wise Men that he wanted to pay the child homage, which was a lie. Herod wanted to kill the child, and needed directions, which only the Wise Men following the Star could provide. This was all going on as Mom and

Dad were dealing with a new born and with visitors from the East bearing gifts. Not an easy time for the parents,. Not just threatening, but confusing as well.

So, how do parents cope? How do parents navigate all the challenges of raising children? How did you do it? How are you doing it? What is your secret, your strategy, your source of patience? Well, we get a clue in our other lessons this morning.

From the prophet Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 31:7-14**): “Thus says the Lord: ‘Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘Save, O Lord, our people, the remnant of Israel.’”

Mary and Joseph understood their parenting as part of something bigger than one couple and one child. And this something was not to be feared, but to be embraced. The Jewish people were grounded in hope. And they all had a role to play in fulfilling this hope. It could be a minor role or a major role. For Mary and Joseph, the role was major. They were part of sustaining hope, and perhaps even fulfilling hope.

It was this sense of purpose that allowed them to do the heavy lifting for which they were called. From today’s Psalm (**Psalm 84**): “The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.” Mom and Dad accepted that they were the “house” and the “nest” that Jeremiah described. Later in the Psalm, “O Lord of hosts, happy are they who put their trust in you!” Mom and Dad trusted, a critical ingredient in parenting.

In his letter to the Ephesians (**Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a**), St. Paul bolsters the spirits of early believers in the Risen Christ. “I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you ...”

This is the same hope that Mary and Joseph held. Their son was part of a Divine plan, a Divine strategy, to save the Creation. They were custodians of the Savior for whom the Jews had been waiting for centuries. Again, a sense purpose, a sense of responsibility, a sense of being called, not to be the Savior, but to care for the Savior.

This sense of custodian responsibility goes with parenthood. We are supposed to help our children grow into their potential. Sometimes, however, the potential we see for our children is different from the potential the children see for themselves. Our job is not to force our version on them, but to support them in their version. There's a difference between asking "Are you sure?" and stating "This is what we expect."

We can be sure that Mary and Joseph struggled with their hopes for their son, which didn't include crucifixion and their son's hope for himself, which certainly carried the possibility of crucifixion. "Please son, don't cause any trouble."
"Don't worry, Mom and Dad, I know what I am doing. It is my Father's will."

How did that make Joseph feel? He probably wanted to scream at this son, "No, your earthly father's will is that you live." But, of course, Jesus was not describing his earthly father. Jesus was describing the Lord.

Such moments are really tough for parents. We see our children heading for a cliff, and we try to warn them, maybe even stop them. But sometimes they are determined. Jesus was determined. And, given all that had gone on before, Mom and Dad probably weren't surprised.

The reality is that there is just so much that parents can do. Kids grow up. Kids develop a sense of purpose. Kids sometimes learn lessons the hard way. And parents have to bit their tongues. Pain is shared. Remember that Mary the mother was at the Crucifixion. Not the life for her son that she had hope for. But Mary the mother was also at the Resurrection. She experienced the Empty Tomb. The God she trusted from the moment of conception she could still trust.

Whatever challenges parenthood brings, trust in the Lord, is, if not essential, then very, very helpful. That trust is evident in our worship. Indeed, the sharing of trust is the purpose of worship. We come together to support one another, by reminding and modeling and living by verse 13 of today's Psalm: "O Lord of hosts, happy are they who put their trust in you! It's that direct relationship between trust and joy that we all seek. May God bless our efforts in this regard.

Amen

Lessons for Second Sunday of Christmas – January 3, 2021

Collect: O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14

Thus says the Lord: “Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘Save, O lord, your people, the remnant of Israel. See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born. Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.’ For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,” says the Lord.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 84

How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts!

My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in living God.

The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young;

by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my god.

Happy are the people whose strength is in you!

whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.

Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs,

for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

They will climb from height to height,

and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.

Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;

hearken, O God of Jacob.

Behold our defender, O God;

and look upon the face of your Anointed.

For one day in your courts is better than a thousand in my own room,

and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.

For the Lord God is both sun and shield;

he will give grace and glory;

No good thing will the Lord withhold

from those who walk with integrity.

O Lord of hosts,

happy are they who put their trust in you!

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved ... I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

After the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son ..." When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go here. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Hymns for Second Sunday of Christmas – January 3, 2021

Hymn 110, stanzas 1 and 4

The snow lay on the ground

The snow lay on the ground, the stars shone bright,
when Christ our Lord was born on Christmas night.
Venite adoremus, Dominum. Venite adoremus, Dominum.
Venite adoremus, Dominum. Venite adoremus, Dominum.

And thus that manger poor became a throne;
for he whom Mary bore was God the Son.
O come, then, let us join the heavenly host;
to praise the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Venite adoremus, Dominum. Venite adoremus, Dominum.

Hymn 112, stanzas 1 and 4

In the bleak midwinter

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him - give my heart.

Hymn 102, stanzas 1 and 2

One in royal David's city

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven, who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor, the scorned, the lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy.