

January 10, 2010

SOLI DEO GLORIA
1st Sunday after Epiphany

Good Shepherd, Novi

LUKE 2:41-52

THE LORD HAS COME INTO HIS TEMPLE.

In the name + of Jesus.

After 2,000 years, you would think that the Church would look more glorious than she does. You would think that people from all over the world would line up to be known as the people of God because God's people are so radiant, so glorious, and so impressive. It is not so. ***With a scornful wonder, the world sees her oppressed by schism rent asunder, by heresies distressed.*** (*The Church's One Foundation*, CW 538:4)

The Church has never appeared glorious. Consider the tabernacle of Old Testament Israel. "Tabernacle" is a fancy word. It might make their church sound pretty elaborate. The tabernacle was a tent. It was goat hair and leather. It did not look glorious.

Later, King David wanted to build a more elaborate and ornate house for the Lord. He made extensive preparations. His son, King Solomon, built it and dedicated it. So that the Israelites would have no doubt that the Lord would, indeed, dwell with them in this temple, a **cloud filled the temple of the LORD ... for the glory of the LORD filled his temple. (1 Kings 8:10,11)** The Lord had come into his temple. This temple was glorious and ornate.

But the Lord was not pleased with Israel. The lavish features of the temple did not make Israel faithful. So, the Lord forsook that temple. It was destroyed. Israel was carried off into exile.

After seven decades of captivity, the Israelites returned to Jerusalem. They built a new temple. Zerubbabel's temple lacked the grandeur of Solomon's temple. Yet, the Lord gave this promise: **"The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house..." (Haggai 2:9)** The glory would be greater, because God would come in the flesh to this temple.

And so he did. When Jesus was 12 years old, his parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. While they made their way back to Galilee with the caravan of family and friends, Jesus stayed behind. Once Jesus' parents recognized that he was not in their company, they returned to Jerusalem. **After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. (Luke 2:46,47)**

Joseph and Mary were amazed to find Jesus in the temple. They did not think he belonged there. Jesus did not think that he belonged anywhere else. **"Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49)** Where else would Jesus be? The Lord had come into his temple.

And yet, his appearance was not that glorious. Even Joseph and Mary were deceived by his appearance. Jesus was only a 12 year old boy whom they wanted him to come home to Nazareth where he could do his chores. Jesus, however, did not forget who he was. He remembered what Joseph and Mary had, no doubt, told him – how the angels had appeared both to Joseph and to Mary. **"The holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) "You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)** He studied the Scriptures which foretold who he was and what he had come to do. Why else was he among the rabbis, asking

them questions and giving them answers? Where else could Jesus be? **“Didn’t you know I had to be about my Father’s things?” (Luke 2:49)** Don’t be deceived by the appearance of a 12 year old boy. He is who the angels said he was. He is who the Scriptures foretold. Jesus is the Lord; and the Lord has come into his temple.

It is so easy to think little of Jesus. You do it for the same reason as Joseph and Mary – you are not impressed by his appearance. Jesus appears so common, so weak, so humble. You do it for the same reason the Jews rejected him. You look for miraculous signs from him. You want Jesus to do something magnificent and miraculous in your life. But he does not. You are still weak. You still struggle and suffer. Your life is not glorious. Since you are not great, it is easy to think that Jesus is not that great either.

The Lord has entered his temple. The temple is where the Lord dwells with his people. Now, you are that temple; for you are God’s people. God dwells in you by faith. While we know that God is glorious, we see that we are not. We are so common, so weak, so humble. In fact, it is worse than that. We are frail. We falter. We struggle. We sin. The Church does not appear glorious, and we are daily contributors to that fact. Our devotion is half-hearted. Our obedience is reluctant. Our love is for ourselves first. Even our righteous acts are only filthy rags. If this is what it looks like to be a Christian, it is not only unbelievers who are less than impressed. So are we.

Repent of your delusions. The problem is not with Jesus. The problem is you and me. We are the problem, because we are sinners. Sin is always the problem. Jesus is always the solution. He is the only solution, because he is our only hope. Jesus always works through weakness. Jesus works this way to show us that our salvation is not our doing. We are not saved because we are innocent or glorious, because we have got it all together or because we have it all figured out. No, our lives are the proof that we need a Savior. Even though we are God’s temple, we are still weak. We still struggle. We still suffer. We are still dying. We do not look impressive or glorious. We still need a Savior.

Your Savior has come. Jesus perfectly conformed to his Father’s will. He did it, not because he feared God’s threats, but because he truly did find God’s will to be good, pleasing, and perfect. Didn’t you know that he had to be about his Father’s things? He was compelled by his love for the Lord. His delight was in the law of the Lord, and on his Law he meditated day and night ... and in the temple at age 12 among the rabbis and scholars.

And as he meditated upon God’s word, he found his delight in what he would do for you. He would exchange his perfect obedience for your sin. He would exchange his total devotion for your sinful cravings. He takes the sufferings and death from you and grants you blessings and life. This great exchange was made in Holy Baptism. There, Jesus took up your sins and guilt. He made himself a holy sacrifice for you. It did not appear very glorious or pretty. Your salvation came as the result of Jesus’ suffering and dying. As it was in the temple, so it was at the cross – forgiveness came through blood. It might not appear pretty or glorious, but it is perfect and effective.

In turn, Jesus washes away your sins through baptism. He created in you a clean heart and renewed a right spirit within you. Jesus came and made his dwelling within you. In this way, you have become God’s temple. The Lord has come into his temple; and Ezra has been given these benefits as well. For, salvation is not our doing; it is all God’s doing, God’s blessing. And with a new, God-given spirit, he invigorates you to offer yourselves as living sacrifices. He puts to death your sin and enlightens you to see that

God's will is good, pleasing, and perfect. He makes you God's people, and he makes you want to live as God's people.

The Lord has come into his temple, and you are that temple. You may not appear glorious to this world, but don't let that bother you. The world's judgment does not matter. God's does. Do not fret if you do not appear glorious; Jesus didn't either. But it is not about what he looked like; it is about who he is. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And it is not about what you look like; it is about who God says you are. You are children of the Most High God through faith in Jesus. That is glorious no matter how it looks.

On the Last Day, Jesus will return, and he will appear in all his glory. On that day, he will transform you so that you will appear as glorious as Jesus says you are. Until that day, cling to Jesus for your hope, your comfort, and your glory. He will dwell in you and will, at last, bring you to dwell with him.

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PSALM 84 (page 96)

Unison

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. He said to me, “You are my servant in whom I will display my splendor.” Alleluia.

SERMON PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER FOR EPIPHANY (page 124)

INTERCESSIONS

- **For the family of Debbie Walentovic (sister of Dan Schneider) who was called to eternal rest this week (1/7)**
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