

FAMILY WORSHIP

Our Dear CHRIST Enters In



- The **Gospel Reading**, Luke 1:5-25, is spoken by the pastor:

¶ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”

- The **Song for Children** is sung by the children to the tune Freu Dich Sehr 87 87 77 88:

Comfort, comfort ye my people, speak ye peace, thus saith our God.
 Comfort those who sit in darkness, mourning 'neath their sorrows' load.
 Speak ye to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them,
 Tell her that her sins I cover, and her warfare now is over.

Yes, her sins our God will pardon, blotting out each dark misdeed;
 All that well deserved his anger he will no more see nor heed.
 She hath suffered many a day, now her griefs have passed away;
 God will change her pining sadness into ever-springing gladness.

For the herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near,
Bidding all to true repentance, since the kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey, now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise to meet him, and the hills bow down to greet him.

Make ye straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain;
Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign;
For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token that his Word is never broken.

- The **Message** is delivered by the pastor:

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

Let me tell you the story of a friend of mine. Every year my friend and a bunch of cyclists do a bike trip across a state to raise funds for a mission organization of which he is a part. Late in June 2023, they were going to do a trip across Minnesota. My friend was so very excited, because that is the state in which he grew up! He is still a Minnesotan at heart.

My friend had trained for a couple months to get ready for this ride. He had helped with a lot of the planning for it. He was ready to go, except that a few days before the ride he started coughing. He put it out of his mind and kept on preparing. He wasn't going to let a little cough stop him. The trouble was that it kept getting worse. He was too stubborn to let it stop him though.

My friend and his biking group got to the starting point on the day the ride began. It was a beautiful day, although it was warm and very windy. But my friend felt awful. Still, he was bound and determined to do it. The group got going and things were going OK, but my friend was struggling. His chest was tight, He felt like he was coughing up a lung, but he kept on pedaling. The cyclists were on a straightaway in the middle of farmland and there was a headwind, so my friend put his head down and was looking at the ground just trying to get to the first stop, when, all of a sudden, out of nowhere jumped a mailbox. He had run into it with his handlebars and went tumbling to the ground.

His leg was bleeding, he had a bit of road rash and he had jammed his elbow into his ribs so they both hurt a lot, but my friend got up and got back on his bike. He started pedaling again, but as he kept going, it got harder and harder to breathe. He made it to the first checkpoint, but that's as far as he went. He hurt too much. He went to the urgent care where they took a chest X-ray and although no bones were broken, he did find out that he had pneumonia.

Needless to say, my friend was not a happy cyclist. His body hurt all over from the crash, in addition to the sickness. But mostly the fall off the bike hurt his pride. He was so embarrassed. Mailboxes don't jump out at you out of nowhere. It hurt his spirit. He had worked so hard to be ready for this ride. So he was humbled by the fall and being sick. He was sure that the rest of the guys thought he was a wimp.

But my friend had to swallow his pride and help the rest of the cyclists the rest of the week. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as our hurts so often do. If my friend would not have crashed, who knows how bad his pneumonia would have gotten? It got caught in time, and he was able to recover rather quickly. With the help of some good medicine, my friend was able to ride one day, and he was able to pull into the school he went to as a kid. That was the only day he rode though. He learned so many lessons from that week, and he made so many new friends that he wouldn't have made had he just been biking on the road.

I relay to you this story about my friend to tell you this: God so often works in us and through us *through our hurts*! In our Gospel reading today we see an older couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth. They had wanted to have a child but were not able. You can imagine the hurt they went through. You can imagine how much it hurt as Elizabeth would see a happy mom with her children and know that she would never experience that. Or would she?

One day, as Gospel tells us, an angel came to Zechariah while he was serving in the Temple and told him that Elizabeth was going to have a child. He was to name him John. Zechariah had a very hard time believing it, as would you and I. The angel gave him a sign. He wouldn't be able to talk until the child was born. I'm sure Elizabeth had her doubts too. The hurts she had experienced throughout her life wouldn't let her believe it the way she should.

But God worked through that hurt. He worked through their doubts. John the Baptist would be born, and he would be a sign to the whole nation of Israel, and to the whole world for that matter, that the Lamb of God, the Son of God, had come to take away the sin of the world.

There is another person who had great hurts too. He is prophesied about in our Old Testament reading for today. It says that he was despised and rejected, that he was stricken, smitten and afflicted. His name, of course, is Jesus!

In his wounds we are healed! In his suffering and death we are saved. It isn't ours to brag about. We have no part in his suffering and death other than that we were and are the cause of it. He actually heals our wounds through his own wounds! He took our guilt, our disappointments, our embarrassments and our failures upon himself, and in return he gave us his perfect life, his innocence, his love and his forgiveness!

Tune.....St. Thomas SM

1

1

5

5

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "St. Thomas SM". The score is written for a grand piano, with a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into two systems, each containing five measures. The first system is marked with a "1" above the first measure of both staves. The second system is marked with a "5" above the first measure of both staves. The melody is primarily in the treble staff, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The notation includes various note values, rests, and bar lines.

- The **Song** is sung by all to the tune St. Thomas SM:

The advent of our King our prayers must now employ;
And we must hymns of welcome sing in strains of holy joy.

The everlasting Son incarnate deigns to be,
Himself a servant's form puts on to set his servants free.

O Zion's daughter, rise to meet your lowly King,
Nor let your faithless heart despise the peace he comes to bring.

As judge on clouds of light, he soon will come again
And his true members all unite with him in heav'n to reign.

Before the dawning day let sin's dark deeds be gone,
The sinful self be put away, the new self now put on.