

What A Marvel
Luke 2:22-40

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

Before I go too far, let me wish you a Merry CHRISTmas.

I was driving home one evening, listening to the pundits on sports radio dissect the Packer game, and regaling us with what they believed the Packers need to do to get to the Super Bowl, when flashing red and blue lights reflected brightly in the rearview mirror. What do you think was the next thing that happened?

I'll let you ponder that a bit.

Before I touched the break to slow down and shut off the cruise control, I did glance at the speedometer. So, when the officer came up to the window and asked if I knew why he'd stopped me. I looked him square in the eye and said, "No, I haven't a clue."

He said, "Well, you have a headlight out. I'm not going to write you a ticket, but a warning, you need to get it taken care of as soon as possible." I must say, I was a bit nervous as I sat there waiting for him to get up to my window.

When we think of the law, that is often the direction into which our 21st Century American mind wanders. Is that what it means in our Epistle lesson when Paul writes, *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

Well, in part.

You all know the Christmas Gospel lesson - about the decree for the first census under Caesar Augustus. God in human flesh subjected Himself to human law, going to Bethlehem in the womb of His mother. We see the Creator of all, who sustains all that exists, and who gives authority to rulers and governments, subjecting Himself to the very authorities He put in place.

We could learn from this that we too are to submit ourselves to the laws of our land and the form of government in place. That means that we obey the law's decrees. It also means that as our government allows us a voice, we should exercise it - it is our way of rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

Have you done so? Do you speak up for all the unborn? Have you exercised your lawful right to call or write to your congressmen and representatives to speak out on the issues in regard to family and marriage? How about in regard to end of life issues?

Submit yourselves under the law, do what you are to do as citizens.

As God sent forth His Son to be under human law, He also subjected Himself to Divine Law. In our Gospel lesson, we learn that *when the time came for their purification* (that is, the purification of Mary and her infant child, who is also the Son of God) *according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."*

The purpose for purification is to be cleansed of sin. Mary's Son was without sin, there was no reason for Him to be purified. Mary needed to be purified, made holy, but Christ did not. Conceived of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was born without sin, He was holy and pure. But, Jesus came to Jerusalem to fulfill the requirements of the

God's Ceremonial Law – for you, me, and all mankind – to fulfill the Law, the sacrifice was made for Him.

And so it began. Jesus and His family went to Jerusalem, *And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.*

Is that any different than us today? God's Law places requirements upon us and our lives, and we are swift to be obedient to obey them and fulfill what God requires, right? Or do we expend more energy often looking for the loopholes to wiggle out of God's Law?

We can come to church occasionally, that's good enough.

We can pray once in a while, just so we don't forget forever.

As long as we have a Bible, it doesn't matter if we read it and follow it.

Do we follow God's Law for our life, just like we set the cruise control at 62 hoping that while we're really breaking the law, it is close enough that the officer running radar on 22 will just let us slide?

If such were the case with God, would He have sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons? Wouldn't it have been easier to just let us slide?

For five more days, we get to celebrate CHRISTmas. It is a twelve day season beginning on Christmas Day and ending on Epiphany. It is a twelve day celebration of the fact that God took on human flesh. That infant Child, so precious and innocent, wrapped in swaddling clothes is brought to the temple today. We're still rejoicing in His birth, that God would come and submit Himself in perfect obedience to the Law is simply amazing.

In our text, we read about a man named Simeon. He was there at the temple that day. He was a man under the Law. He knew and felt the weight of His sins. He was waiting for God's salvation to come in the Lord's Christ, in fact, God's Holy Spirit revealed to him that he would not die until he has seen the Lord's Christ.

In walked Joseph and Mary, holding the child Jesus. Simeon saw through the disguise, he recognized his salvation from sin hidden in the flesh and blood of that little child. And then, He blessed God, saying, *"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*

Do you recognize your salvation? Do you recognize your freedom from the Law? Do you see with the eyes of faith that God visits you and brings to you forgiveness, life and salvation? Do you see God's Christ?

Mary and Joseph marveled at what was said about their Child. They'd gotten lost in the stinky diapers, the midnight feedings, the things that make up raising a helpless infant. They knew what the angel had said, what had been revealed to them, but God's power and might were not obvious, so they marveled that it had been revealed to another, and again revealed to them through him. What a marvel their Child is. What a marvel that their Son will accomplish the salvation of so many.

Have you truly thought about it all? You get the words right, for you sing the same words Simeon spoke. You sing them after you have eaten and drunk the holy food Christ places before you. Do you see beyond the outward forms of your pastor's voice, the simple wafer, and the drink of wine? Do you hear Christ forgive sins? Do you see eternal life? Do you eat of His body and drink of His blood, given for you?

It is a marvel how God works, isn't it? God uses water and makes us His own children. Today, Jaxton was united to Christ – made one with Him. He was baptized into Christ – into His death, and resurrection. You do not see it, but He was made a child of God in the miracle of baptism.

What a marvel that your adoption papers were drawn up, delivered and sealed in the waters of baptism. You were made a Son, for you were united to Christ. And if you are a son, then you are an heir of God. Everything that is God's is yours, for in Christ, you and I have kept the Law.

What a marvel it is that you and I cannot be accused by Satan. Yes, you were born under the Law, but you have been redeemed from that way of life. What a marvel that you have been adopted and made a part of God's holy family unto life everlasting.

Today one more present has been unwrapped for you. What a marvel it is to say to you, Merry CHRISTmass. Amen.