

Christmas Day 2022

"The Question, and the Answer"

Text: 1 Samuel 8:4-9

*Come, O long-expected Jesus, born to set Your people free;
From our sins and fears release us, by Your death on Calvary.*

*Born Your people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us forever, now your gracious kingdom bring.*

*By Your own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
By Your all sufficient merit, raise us to Your glorious throne. (WS 705)*

May the undeserved love of God, demonstrated so beautifully in the manger in Bethlehem, be forever grafted into your heart; and may you know the peace that comes only through faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, and your King. Amen

Dear Fellow Servants of the Baby King:

Do you remember Advent Calendars? We loved them as kids. It was a simpler time, but every day, beginning on December 1, one of us would get to open the little flap on the calendar for that day to see what was behind it – usually a tiny picture of something related to the birth of Jesus, or maybe a Bible passage intended to focus our attention on the real Christmas. Are they still around?

The answer is yes, they're still around. We now know them by a different name – the Old Testament. The Old Testament is one great big Advent calendar. Every day you can go there, open a little window, and find some picture or bit of information about the coming of the Promised Messiah. The entire Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, is all about Jesus. It is certainly not inappropriate therefore that our text for this Christmas morning is found in the Old Testament – the 1st Book of Samuel, the 8th Chapter:

ESV(1 Samuel 8:4-9) Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵ and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but

they have rejected me from being king over them. ⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. ⁹ Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."

This is God's Word. On this Christmas Day we celebrate the giving of many gifts. God's very words are the single greatest gift given by God to mankind since the birth of our Savior. We struggle to value them accordingly as we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!"** Amen.

The Old Testament as one big Advent Calendar is a great image. There is another that comes to mind every time I see one of those signs: **"Jesus is the Answer!"** The thought that invariably pops into my head is: **"What's the Question?"** Don't misunderstand. Jesus is the answer, the *only* answer, to life's most important questions. The problem is that answers are robbed of their relevance and importance if they are not preceded by questions. **"Let most of the air out of the tires"** is a great answer, but only if you know that the question is **"How am I going to get this semi, which is 2" too tall, under that bridge?"**

That's where the Old Testament comes in. The Old Testament is where we get the questions. The New Testament is where we get the answers.

And speaking of questions, one fairly common question, especially among new Christians who want to get into the Bible, is **"Where should I start reading?"** The answer depends on the individual, but the suggestion most often given is to start with the Gospels in the New Testament, or maybe one of Paul's Epistles. The greatest drawback with that approach is that you tend to find the answers before you really know the questions.

Those key questions begin to form already in the Book of Genesis. The fall into sin enslaved not just Adam and Eve, but all of mankind that would follow. Fallen mankind was powerless to free itself from its slavery to sin and Satan. We needed an "outsourced" rescue that we ourselves could never provide. The first and greatest question is then, **"Who will rescue us?"**

Much of what follows in the Old Testament tells of mankind's struggle to find the answer to this most basic question. God led the Children of

Israel into 400 years of slavery in Egypt as one great big, long object lesson as to the futility of trying to free themselves from their far greater slavery. Then God himself freed them – another object lesson. *“You can’t free yourselves, but I can free you. The answer to your question (“Who will rescue us?”) is Me. I’m the One that will deliver you.”*

The Jews were never quite satisfied with this answer for very long. They would turn from God and seek their own answers, their own solutions. Anarchy, debauchery, and misery would follow. For a time, God provided judges like Samson and Gideon to deliver them, temporarily easing their misery but never really solving their problem or answering their question. It was a time when everyone tried to rescue themselves, when, as we read in the Book of Judges, **“there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”**^{ESV}(Judges 17:6)

This is the history that led up to the events described in our text. Still looking for the answer to their question (*“Who will rescue us?”*) Israel came to the conclusion that the answer was get a king. *“A king will deliver us! We want a king, just like all the other nations have.”* Sounds oddly familiar, doesn’t it? *“Let’s try what routinely fails everywhere else, because we think it will work here.”* The reality was Israel wasn’t so much trying to get a king as they were trying to get rid of the King they already had. From our text: **And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.”**

What bitter irony. They already possessed the answer to their question, the solution to their problem. God was their King, and he was the one who would rescue them. They opted for a different path, a different answer. They wanted an earthly king.

Ever notice how stubborn, sin-blinded men occasionally blurt out divine truth, though the truth is never what they intended? The terrified Jews begged for a mediator at Mt. Sinai. God’s reply: *“Will do, but it won’t be what you think.”*^{ESV}(1 Timothy 2:5-6) **For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,** ⁶ **who gave himself as a ransom for all.** The godless high priest Caiaphas tried to style cold-blooded murder as virtuous wisdom when he said, **“It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”** Absolutely true, but not the way he meant it. So also here. The people asked for a king not in heaven but on earth. God’s response: *“He’s coming, but it’s not what you think.”* Their earthly kings all turned out to be clay vessels that failed to bring lasting deliverance. Even the great King David failed in particularly spectacular

fashion, and his son Solomon was pulled into spiritual chaos by his many pagan wives. It wasn’t that God failed to warn them. Again from our text: **“Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”**

Yet that didn’t change the fact that the people did, in fact, need a king – a king that would walk among them on this earth. A king that would faithfully serve them, fight for them, and finally deliver them.

With this background, hear again the message of the angel to Mary: **And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”**^{ESV}(Luke 1:30-33)

Mankind absolutely needed a King, which is exactly what God sent at Christmas. Yet he was nothing like what the Jews had come to expect. In fact, when he failed to live up to their expectations, when he gave them what they needed instead of what they wanted, they first disowned him and then they murdered him. You recall their words at Jesus’ trial: **Pilate said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” ¹⁵ They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”**^{ESV}(John 19:14-15)

The King sent from heaven to walk among us for a time was nothing at all like what mankind expected, and it is critically important that you and I see exactly who it was that lay in that manger. The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul described him as **“he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light... To him be honor and eternal dominion.”**^{ESV}(1 Timothy 6:15-16) Again we read John’s description in Revelation 19: **Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him**

on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is the Baby we see in the manger. This was, this *is*, the answer to the Old Testament question: *Who will deliver us?* Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Promised One, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. This is also why wonder should continue to fill our hearts and souls when we see that magnificent, all-powerful, all-knowing King of kings and Lord of lords wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger – a stable his first home. There we see God's answer to man's most important question. There we learn not only that we were powerless to either find or provide our own rescue, our own release from our slavery to sin and Satan, there we see just how powerless we actually were. Look and see with the eyes of understanding just who it was that came, and thereby also then learn the enormity of our debt of sin and the great and terrible price that had to be paid for our ransom. The payment required was infinitely more than just the life of a human baby. The only payment that could cover the cost was the life of the very Son of God. This was a payment we could never have made, a release that on our own we could never have accomplished. *That* is why Jesus is the answer, the only answer, and that is why we celebrate Christmas as we do. Amen.

The Pre-Sermon Hymn -105 (*Stanzas 1-3, 6-8*) (*Red Hymnal*)
"Praise God the Lord, Ye Sons of Men"

The Sermon – Text: 1 Samuel 8:4-9
The Christmas Address by the Pastor

The Post-Sermon Hymn -705 (*Brown Hymnal*)
"Come, O Long-Expected Jesus"

The Prayers followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Communion Preparation (*The Christian Questions*)

The Distribution of Holy Communion

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -91 (*Stanzas 1-2, 4-5 & 9*) (*Red Hymnal*)
"Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this Christmas morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!

St. Paul Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative synod with congregations throughout the United States and missions and affiliates around the world. If you are visiting from another city, please ask the pastor for the name of a CLC church near you.

Announcements:

Christmas Flowers – If you purchased one of the poinsettias with which the church has been decorated again this Christmas season, please feel free to take your plant(s) home with you after the service this morning, or consider gifting them to someone who might enjoy them.

Schedule – Please note that Confirmation Class is scheduled to resume this Wednesday at 6pm. Midweek Bible Study is scheduled to resume on January 11th. It is our intention to follow the regular schedule next Sunday, including Bible Class and Sunday School at 9am and Sunday Worship at 10am.



St Paul Lutheran Church Bismarck, ND

**Christmas Day Service
2022**



ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist
Michael Roehl, Pastor

Christmas Day Service – December 25, 2022

Pre-Service Music

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn -87 (*Stanza 1*) (*Red Hymnal*)
"Joy to the World"

Scripture Reading by the Pastor

(*Isaiah 9:2, 6-7*) The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined...⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

The Response Sung by the Congregation – (Hymn 79)

Rejoice, rejoice this happy morn, a Savior unto us is born,
The Christ the Lord of Glory.
His lowly birth in Bethlehem the angels from on high proclaim
And sing redemption's story.
My soul, extol God's great favor, bless Him ever for salvation.
Give Him praise and adoration.

Call to Repentance by the Pastor

On this great day we lift our hearts and voices in thanksgiving to our God. Yet our joy on this occasion is also mixed with sobriety, for we recognize that it was our sin that brought Jesus to earth, where He paid the penalty that we deserved. It is fitting and right therefore that we humbly confess our sins to our God on this morning when we celebrate the birth of the One who came to pay for those sins.

The Confession of Sins (*Sung to "Oh Come Oh Come Emmanuel"*)

1. Alas, my God, my sins are great, my conscience doth upbraid me;
And now I find that in my strait, no man hath power to aid me.
Forgive me Lord; turn not my soul away; for Jesus died to save me.

2. And fled I hence in my despair, in some lone spot to hide me,
My griefs would still be with me there, and peace still be denied me.
Forgive me Lord; turn not my soul away; for Jesus died to save me.
3. Lord, Thee I seek, I merit naught; yet pity and restore me.
Just God, be not Thy wrath my lot; Thy Son hath suffered for me.
Forgive me Lord; turn not my soul away; for Jesus died to save me.

Absolution (*Announced by the Pastor*)

Response (*Sung to the tune of 708 "Oh Come All Ye Faithful"*)

The Lord God be with us, and with all His children
Oh come let us lift our spirits unto the Lord
With hearts rejoicing, thanks to Him we render
With joy we come before Him, in gratefulness implore Him
With thankful hearts adore Him, Christ the Lord!

The Collect for the Day (*Read by the Pastor*)

Grant, Almighty God, that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in human flesh may bring true joy to our hearts – we who through sin were held in the bondage of darkness and despair. This we ask through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

The Scripture Lessons:

The Old Testament Lesson: (Isaiah 62:1-4,10-12) As the Lord dealt with our sin problem in a most remarkable way, so it ought not surprise us that the Lord also demonstrated his power in a most remarkable way. The great power of God is his love and mercy, demonstrated nowhere more clearly than in the gift of His Son as our Savior.

The New Testament Lesson: (Galatians 4:1-7) Our New Testament reading gives us a special insight into the event we celebrate on this day – the birth of our Lord Jesus. God was not slow in keeping his promise to send our Savior. He knew there was a "just right time" and he sent Jesus at just that right time.

The Confession of Faith – (The Christmas Creed)

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Who sent His Son to become my Savior;

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, my Lord, the long-promised Messiah, Who came as foretold, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, announced by the angels, worshipped by the shepherds, adored by the Wise Men, Who lived to suffer, die, and rise again, To free me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil;

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, Who has brought me to faith in my Savior, And by whose continuous work in my heart, I rejoice in my salvation, Walk in Christ, Show forth His praises, And will one day live and reign with Him eternally. Amen.