

**Lessons for The First Sunday after Christmas**

**December 31, 2023**

Psalm 111 ~ *This highly structured psalm praises the order and trustworthy nature of God's works.*

Isaiah 61:10—62:3 ~ *The righteousness of God brings people of all nations to His glory.*

Galatians 4:4–7 ~ *At the right time God sent His Son to make us His children.*

Luke 2:22–40 ~ *When every time was right, God revealed His salvation accomplished through Jesus.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** The Consolation of Israel

God fulfilled His promise at the appointed time. In Jesus, Simeon and Anna recognized the promised Consolation of Israel, the Comfort foretold by Isaiah for God's people, revealing God's grace to the Gentiles and His glory to Israel. Through His birth, Jesus placed Himself under the burden of the Law with us, to carry the curse of the Law for us. The peace of God which rules our hearts shows itself in forgiveness for others just as God forgives us through Christ our Savior.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Lord, You have allowed me to see and, once again to celebrate, the birth of the One who came to free us from the power of sin and death. Now I am ready to face death with confidence. While I still live in this world, grant me grace to tell others of Your salvation through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** God has given us salvation through the gift of His Son; our gifts to God for the spread of this Good News help shine God's light to all nations.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** Lord, in the fullness of Your time, through the power of Your Son,  
You rescued us from sin and made us children of Your grace.  
From slavery to service, You have turned us, every one;  
Now use us as Your messengers in this and every place. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** When the time was right in God's eternal plan, he sent his son, born of a woman, under the law. We often put ourselves above the law, civil as well as God's law, acting as though laws do not apply to us. But the law of God brings its curse upon us for our sin. Thanks be to God, he has rescued us from that curse by becoming a curse for us! We have this message to tell all people.

**Questions to Consider:** Where do you stand with the Law?

- How do we live when we put ourselves above the law?
- What do we do when we realize we are under God's law?
- Why is the incarnation a comfort to God's people?
- Where do we see the peace of God in the hearts of our neighbors?

**See next page for bonus.**

## JESSE'S STUMP

At last the shoot from Jesse's stump has sprung  
to life, to give new life to those who mourn.  
God chose a girl who was herself still young  
when His own time had come. The Christ was born  
an infant under God's own law, to make  
you free from every curse the law can give.  
God's Son took up your life so God could take  
you as His own; He asks that now you live  
the way old Simeon must have lived when he  
had seen with his own eyes, the little boy  
who'd be a light of love for all to see,  
who'd win for all, God's peace and Christmas joy.  
You too, have seen God's grace abundantly;  
now go, and serve the Lord, for you are free!

-- Gilbert A. Franke, December 1975