

Lessons for First Sunday after Christmas

December 30, 2018

Psalm 111 – *Praise God for His enduring righteousness and promise of redemption.*

Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15 ~ *God's people remembered their rescue from Egypt at the cost of the firstborn sons.*

Colossians 3:12-17 ~ *Those redeemed by God's grace give up their complaints to live in the peace of Christ.*

Luke 2:22-40 ~ *Mary and Joseph presented Jesus, who was recognized as God's redemption for His people.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: God's Strong Hand for Redemption

Through all succeeding generations, the people of Israel redeemed their first born sons with the sacrifice of a lamb or dove, remembering how God had rescued them from Egypt at the great cost of the first born sons of all the land. God's own Son, born in the flesh, first son of Mary, was presented to the Lord along with two turtledoves, but Himself became the redeeming sacrifice for all of Israel, and not for Israel alone but even for the nations. God's strong hand has redeemed His people from bondage to sin and death. He calls upon those who have been rescued to sacrifice their complaints against each other and so live with the peace of Christ in their hearts.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Almighty God, redeeming Lord, as You have given Yourself to rescue me from the bondage of sin, so let me give up my right to seek payment for grievances against me so that I may live in the peace of Christ with all my neighbors. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: To remember the cost of their freedom from slavery, the Israelites returned an offering to the Lord for their first born sons. When we have an opportunity to invest the time and treasure of our lives in the service of God's kingdom, it should remind us that we have been set free from the servitude of our self interest.

OFFERING PRAYER: A lamb for the first-born won the release
Of Israel's children from Pharaoh's domain.
Now bless these gifts, Lord, to show forth Your peace
In service to all those for whom Jesus came.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: The purchase of their first born reminded the Israelites of God's redemptive hand in Egypt. God calls upon us to remember the sacrifice of His own Son and the great cost by which we were redeemed from the bondage of sin and death, but we spend more energy remembering grievances we have over the way we have been treated by others. God will never forget His steadfast love for us, expressed and completed in the gift of His grace in Christ Jesus. We live in the peace of God's redeeming love when we forget our complaints against others and forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us.

BONUS: Mended Hearts for Christmas

The Gift, the Giver, and Recipient,
all wrapped in swaddling with a bow of hay,
was present to a broken world that went
along its proud and stubborn, deadly way.
The Gift, the Giver, and Recipient,
with loving care, selected carefully,
handcrafted it Himself and had it sent,
wrapped just in loincloth, hanging on a tree.
The Gift, the Giver, and Recipient,
waits patiently for burdens from your heart,
unwraps the aches and pains, the sins that bent
your love with pride and broke two friends apart.
Now use the gift the Christ Child bought for you;
with healing words mend broken hearts anew.

- Gilbert A. Franke
November 26, 2001