

Christmas 1



Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you have made yourself known in your Son, Jesus, redeemer of the world. We pray that his birth as a human child will set us free from the old slavery of our sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Or

Almighty God, you wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of human nature. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of Jesus Christ who came to share our humanity, and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

{18} Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. {19} His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. {20} Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD"; and then they would return to their home.... {26} Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

18. Samuel was ministering before the LORD: Samuel's mother, Hannah, had made a vow that if she were to bear a son he would be dedicated as a Nazarite forever (1 Samuel 1:11). When Samuel was weaned he was taken to Eli at Shiloh in fulfillment of that vow (1 Samuel 1:24-28). Some years have passed and Samuel is now "ministering" before Yahweh wearing a linen ephod, the proper garment of a priest, though he does not have a priestly pedigree.

20. May the LORD repay you with children by this woman: 1 Samuel 2:21: "And the LORD took note of Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters."

26. Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people: Samuel is commended in contrast with the sons of Eli (verses 22-25).

Comment: "Yahweh's way of making something come out of nothing is here displayed with great clarity and confirms that the story of Samuel does not depict the rise of a man to fame; it is God who calls this man into existence, sets him to his service, is 'with him', calls him, helps him and blesses him.... The story of [Samuel's] youth is of extreme importance for a theological appreciation of the rise of Samuel and of the period of the kings, which was to be inaugurated by him...." [1]

Psalms 148

{1} Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights! {2} Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host! {3} Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! {4} Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! {5} Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. {6} He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed. {7} Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, {8} fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command! {9} Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! {10} Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! {11} Kings of the earth and all peoples,

princes and all rulers of the earth! {12} Young men and women alike, old and young together! {13} Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven. {14} He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 148 is used each year for the First Sunday after Christmas, and also for the Fifth Sunday of Easter in year C.

13. praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted: “In his name Yahweh has proclaimed himself as Creator and King of the universe. The NT church confesses that the name to which all of creation is related is Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 1:15ff.; Heb. 1:3f.).” [2]

14. He has raised up a horn for his people: “...the raising up of a 'horn' is mentioned in v 14. [q^{rn}] is in the OT a symbol for 'strength' (cf. Pss 75:5, 10; 89:17, 24). There is hardly an answer to the question as to what, specifically, is being referred to.” [3] This verse is the basis for Luke 1:69, “and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David his servant” (RSV).

Comment: Psalm 148 is used each year for the First Sunday after Christmas, and also for the Fifth Sunday of Easter in year C.

Psalms 148 belongs to the “Hallelujah Psalms” (Psalms 113-118; 146-150). It is a hymn for public worship. The first part of the hymn calls the heavenly world to praise Yahweh (verses 1-6), and the second part (verses 7-14) calls for praise “from the earth.” Everything from sea monsters to “old and young together.” Are called on to praise the name of Yahweh.

Colossians 3:12-17

{12} As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. {13} Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. {14} Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. {15} And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. {16} Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. {17} And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

12. God's chosen ones: “...it seems most obvious to interpret this verse in terms of the OT covenant bond, namely that the addressees are designated as the ‘chosen people of God.’” [4]

Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience: These are the qualities and attributes which God's chosen ones are to exhibit. These qualities were generally considered servile by the Hellenistic culture in which the Colossian Christians lived, as well as by our own culture. They are qualities characteristic of Christ as an expression of the idea that “Christ is all and in all” (Colossians 3:11).

13. Bear with one another: “The interaction of the chosen ones with each other is to mirror [the] relationship between God and his people.” [5]

as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive: The same thought is expressed in reverse in the Lord's Prayer: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive....”

14. clothe yourselves with love: “As in Rom 13:8-10, 1 Cor 13:1ff., and Gal 5:14, love assumes first place.... ‘above all love...’” [6]

which binds everything together in perfect harmony: Love is a part of all of the attributes of the chosen ones, and is an expression of the love of God in Christ that binds all Christians together.

15. the peace of Christ: Not just the absence of strife, but community wholeness and

well-being.

you were called: The chosen ones did not initiate their being chosen; they were “called” by God to be *one body*. Individual differences, strengths as well as weaknesses, are subordinated to the unity of the chosen people. That unity is not a quality to be achieved by human effort, it is a part of the givenness of the Christian community. Without that unity there is no community.

17. do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus: To do something in the name of the Jesus, means to do it in harmony with his spirit of love and his call for unity. Whatever is done is a clear testimony to desire of God in Christ for his church.

giving thanks to God the Father through him: “Because...the person can perform a new action only ‘through him,’ every action should occur as a form of giving thanks in the name of Jesus. In other words, ‘through him’ in this passage is to be understood as designating the constant giving of thanks ‘which was only made possible and effected through him.’”[7]

Comment: Colossians 3:1-17 describes the death of the earthly and the new life of those who have been chosen by Christ. “Just as in v 8f., the ‘old self’ is characterized by ‘vices,’ so now, when reference is made to putting on the ‘new self,’ this new person is organized with a ‘catalog of virtues.’”[8] This is not a objective achieved by human energy, rather it is the result of the love of God through the gifts of Christ in the power of the Spirit.

Luke 2:41-52

{41} Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. {42} And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. {43} When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. {44} Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. {45} When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. {46} After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. {47} And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. {48} When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." {49} He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" {50} But they did not understand what he said to them. {51} Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. {52} And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

41. every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of Passover: According to the Torah every adult male in Israel was to appear before Yahweh for the three festivals, Passover, Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and Booths (Exodus 23:14, 17; 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16; 1 Kings 9:25). On this occasion Jesus accompanied his parents.

42. when he was twelve: “This mention of the twelfth year is a bit strange, since a male attained his religious majority at 13, when he had to observe the *mizvot* [duties] of the Torah.... ...since there is such a dependency here and in the birth story of John the Baptist on the birth story of Samuel, it is significant that Josephus states that the beginning of Samuel’s prophetic period started during his twelfth year.”[9]

46. listening to them and asking them questions: Jesus was not instructing the teachers in the temple, he was rather a pupil. Later he would be a teacher. His understanding is commended in verse 47.

50. I must be in my Father’s house: “...Jesus ‘knows’ at the age of twelve, if not the content, the large dimensions of his task. The word ‘must’ (impersonal *dei*) characterizes his entire life (cf. 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5; 22:37; 24:7, 26, 44).”[10]

52. *Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor:* Jesus' growth in wisdom and the favor of God has already been mentioned in 2:40, which together with this verse mark the boundaries of this passage. John's spiritual strength was also commended in Luke 1:80. These evaluations are modeled on that of Samuel in the first lesson, and emphasize the spiritual power that these prophetic individuals possessed.

Reflection

In the Gospel Jesus knows that he is called by God and "must be in my Father's house." As he grew he "increased in wisdom...and in divine and human favor." Samuel in the first lesson and the "chosen ones" in the second lesson are called by God, and become what they are through the transforming power of that call. God's "call" to us is a "recreative" action. We become, through God's power, what we were intended to be in creation. By God's act we are freed from our slavery to sin and become what Christ is by nature, children of God.

Hymns [11]

73	--E--All Hail to	790v	--II--Praise to You,
417	--D--In a Lowly	802v	--II--When in Our Music
540	--P--Praise the Lord!	634v	--G--Sing of Mary (756s)
359	--II--In Christ There Is	86, 733s, 555, 504, 512, 64	

Prayers of the People [12]

Prayers of the People [12]

Presider or deacon

As we join the whole creation and celebrate with joy the Word made flesh, let us offer prayers to God who dwells among us to the end of time.

Deacon or other leader

By the wedding of the human and divine natures in Christ Jesus.

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

For all believers who put their trust in the incarnate Son of God.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for peace and justice.

For the conversion of the whole human race to our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For travelers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, for those in prison, and for the dying and the dead.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Remembering our most glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

Source of grace and truth, accept the prayers we offer on this joyful feast. May we come to see the true light who shines throughout the world and who is God for all eternity. Glory to you for ever.

Notes

[1] Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*. London: SCM Press, 1964, p. 44.

[2] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis:

Augsburg, 1989, p.564.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 564.

[4] Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1994, p. 418.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 422.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 423.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 432.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 417.

[9] Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1987, p. 34.

[10] Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: Completely revised and expanded*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, p. 77.

[11] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[12] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>