

Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord * February 2, 2020

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany or Presentation of the Lord (RCL)
Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFjF6QorsDA> Site reads the Gospel with illustrations

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 519 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 139

“In His temple now behold Him”

Author, Henry John Pye, “M.A., son of H. J. Pye, of Clifton Hall, Staffordshire, was born circa 1825, and educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, (B.A. 1848, M.A. 1852.) Taking Holy Orders in 1850, he was presented by his father in 1851 to the Rectory of Clifton-Campville, Staffordshire. In 1868 he, together with his wife (only daughter of Bishop S. Wilberforce), joined the Roman Catholic Church. --John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology* (1907)”

Composer, Henry Purcell “(b. Westminster, London, England, 1659; d. Westminster, 1695), was perhaps the greatest English composer who ever lived, though he only lived to the age of thirty-six. Purcell's first piece was published at age eight... Purcell composed music for the theater (*Dido and Aeneas*, c. 1689) and for keyboards, provided music for royal coronations and other ceremonies, and wrote a substantial body of church music, including eighteen full anthems and fifty-six verse anthems. *Bert Polman*”

- https://hymnary.org/text/in_his_temple_now_behold_him
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBTujhno84g> Piano from TLH 139 [Andrew Remillard](#) “Here is my complete recording of the Lutheran 1941 Hymnal: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list...>”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJPlwirGWWc> Voice and Keyboard *Hymns of the Church Year*, Concordia Publishing House © 2009
- <https://www.sixmaddens.org/?p=9272> Alternate melody set to St Thomas (*tantum ergo*) by John F. Wade

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord *

“The feast of the Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of the Virgin Mary is one of the oldest on the liturgical calendar. It celebrates the occasion on which Jesus’ family underwent both the ritual purification God required of women who have given birth (Lv. 12) and the redemption of the firstborn (Ex. 13:12–15), both of which were to happen 40 days after his birth—hence, the feast of the Presentation and Purification falls each year on February 2, 40 days after Christmas. The account is remembered more for Simeon’s appearance than anything else, and it is that to which we owe the beautiful canticle of Simeon, the *Nunc dimittis*: “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace...” (Lk. 2:29–32). Martin Luther paraphrased Simeon’s canticle as a chorale, sung as the processional hymn this evening: “In Peace and Joy I Now Depart.” Simeon’s canticle introduces one additional aspect to the feast, that of “Candlemas:” it is an ancient and laudable custom that the Church blesses on this day all the candles to be used at the altar and in torches over the following year (this naturally does not apply to the Paschal candle, which is consecrated at the Easter Vigil). This custom recalls how Simeon in his canticle acclaimed Jesus as “a light to lighten the Gentiles.” Candlemas is the

“unofficial” end of the Christmas season: while Christmas proper is twelve days long and is followed immediately by Epiphanytide, the parallel of “40 days of Christmas” to the 40 days of Lent and the 40 days between Easter and the Ascension is an attractive one. (In many locales, household Christmas decorations remain up until February 2.)”

- <https://www.flc-boston.org/vespers-for-the-feast-of-the-presentation-february-2-5pm>

O.T.– “As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.”

Psalm – “blessed is the one who trusts in you!”

Epistle – “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect ”

Gospel – “for my eyes have seen your salvation ”

1 Samuel 1:21-28; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Micah 6:1-8 or Malachi 3:1-4
(Next week: Isaiah 58:3-9a; RCL, Isaiah 58:3-9a (9b-12))

“The first chapter of 1 Samuel presents itself as a watershed moment in the history of Israel.

It draws upon memories from Judges that define Israel in a state of crisis. The rising strength of the Philistines has created a significant external threat. Even deeper threats come from a series of internal collapses. The diffuse and erratic nature of the judges' political leadership has created a situation in which all the people do what is "right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25). In a related crisis, at least some of the priests have become corrupt. Hophni and Phinehas, sons of Eli who serve as priests of the LORD, are "scoundrels" who prey upon the people and treat "the offerings of the LORD with contempt" (1 Samuel 2:12, 17). Political, moral, and religious leadership is in disarray. Israel might not survive this generation.

In the middle of this grim picture 1 Samuel finds a source of renewal. The household of Elkanah and his wives Hannah and Penninah does not look promising at first. It looks instead like a figure for all Israel: Elkanah comes from a distinguished line, and he is pious according to the order of the day, but the household is marked by internal conflict. Penninah has children, but Hannah, whom Elkanah loves, has none...”

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=366 **Ted A. Smith**

Associate Professor of Preaching and Ethics, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA

The Birth of Samuel Verses 1-20

Samuel Given to the LORD

²¹ The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. ²² But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever.” ²³ Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the LORD establish his word.” So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. ²⁴ And when she had

weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull,^[a] an ephah^[b] of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young.²⁵ Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli.²⁶ And she said, “Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD.²⁷ For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him.²⁸ Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.”

And he worshiped the LORD there.

- a. [1 Samuel 1:24](#) Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint, Syriac; Masoretic Text *three bulls*
- b. [1 Samuel 1:24](#) An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters

“The Bible tells us that if we make a vow to the Lord, we should keep that promise. In First Samuel, we see Hannah, the mother of Samuel, fulfilling her vow by giving her son to serve the Lord all the days of his life.

What great sacrifice she made! She had been unable to conceive in her womb until the Lord miraculously gave her a son. So this precious life was given into her hands, and who would blame her if she had wanted to hold onto that child? Yet she kept her vow and brought the child to the Tabernacle of the Lord to serve all the days of his life...

When Hannah delivered Samuel to serve the Lord, she began the ministry of a man who would serve as judge and priest and prophet. Nowhere in Scripture are we shown any of Samuel's specific sins, although we know that surely he must have sinned with all flesh.

But there is a Man greater than Samuel who never sinned. There is a Prophet and Priest who has served on our behalf, giving all His life to service before His Father in heaven. He also will be judge, not only over one nation, but over all nations at the Last Day.

This Man Jesus kept all His promises to be faithful to the Lord. He gave Himself in service, even to the point of shedding His precious Blood. He gave His life into the bitter pains of the one sacrifice that has given atonement for your sins - not a temporary sacrifice of bulls or flour or wine such as Hannah gave, but of a pure and holy Lamb without blemish that takes away all the sins of the world through all of history. This Man has faithfully spoken the pure Word of His Father, not only in His earthly ministry two thousands years ago, but also today as He continues His ministry through His called ministers...”

- <http://lcmssermons.com/?sn=2600> Rev. Andrew Eckert St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Wellston, Oklahoma

Psalm 84; RCL, Psalm 15 or Psalm 84/Psalm 24:7-10
(Psalm 112:1-9; RCL, Psalm 112:1-9 (10))

“In Psalm 23 we have a rather straight forward picture of God being with someone as they walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death; that could be the soldier who knows he’s about to go into the theatre of operations, into combat, or the police officer who is about to enter a known dangerous house unsure of what they will face on the other side of the door, or it could be the fire fighter rushing into the flames to rescue someone from death. The Valley of the

Shadow of Death is often on the mind of the Christian on their deathbed when they know that the time is come and they are truly dying. This The Valley of the Shadow of Death we understand and know; It has long been taught to us and made clear to us that in those times when death is near to us there is Jesus, the Good Shepherd with His rod and staff to comfort us and care for us along the way ... but in Psalm 84 we have another Valley a different the name of which we are not nearly as familiar with or are not familiar with at all: this is the Valley of Baca..." (continued after the reading)

My Soul Longs for the Courts of the LORD

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith.^[a] A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

84 How lovely is your dwelling place,

O LORD of hosts!

² My soul longs, yes, faints

for the courts of the LORD;

my heart and flesh sing for joy

to the living God.

³ Even the sparrow finds a home,

and the swallow a nest for herself,

where she may lay her young,

at your altars, O LORD of hosts,

my King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house,

ever singing your praise!

Selah

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you,

in whose heart are the highways to Zion.^[b]

⁶ As they go through the Valley of Baca

they make it a place of springs;

the early rain also covers it with pools.

⁷ They go from strength to strength;

each one appears before God in Zion.

⁸ O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;

give ear, O God of Jacob!

Selah

⁹ Behold our shield, O God;

look on the face of your anointed!

¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better

than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor.

No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you!

- a. [Psalm 84:1](#) Probably a musical or liturgical term
- b. [Psalm 84:5](#) Hebrew lacks *to Zion*

“...The Psalms are poetry and there is no geographic place named the Valley of Baca in Israel and if there ever was it is lost to ever flowing sands of time. Baca however means “Balsam Tree” and in Israel the Balsam Tree was prized for its aromatic fragrance and used to make medicinal ointments, these trees were cultivated in the city of Jericho and naturally occurred only in one little area near the Dead Sea, historians of the past thought that the tree may have been a gift from Queen Sheba to King Solomon, King David’s son.[1] However these trees made their way to Israel there is an additional poetic play on words here with the Balsam Tree. The Hebrew word Baca sounds very close to the Hebrew word for “sorrow” or “weeping.” So on the one had you have Baca which the original hearer of the Psalm would identify with tree with a fragrant aroma from which medicinal ointments to help a person in a time of sickness could be made and then on the other hand they would also be caught thinking of “sorrow” and “weeping.”[2] Here we have contrasting ideas which very economically create in a poetic way the picture of help in time of need. This play on words is further developed by the use of the word Hebrew word for “pools” which sounds very much like the Hebrew word for “blessings” and then there is also the phrase we have in our translation as “early rain,” that is the rain that comes at the beginning of the rainy season in autumn, that sounds like the Hebrew word for “teacher.”[3] ...

[There is good reason to believe that this is a kind of devotional Psalm for the soldier, who is way from Jerusalem at a time of festival, because the Psalmist calls God The “LORD of hosts,” that is the LORD of the Armies, the hosts are the angels and the men of Israel who fight on behalf of the children of Zion ... This Psalm is a great Psalm for those who are apart from the Divine Serves, those who are shut in, those who must work shift work to make ends meet, those who are in the Military, Police, Fire Fighting Services, the paramedics and other first responders, and those who provide medical care to the sick and dying: This is a prayer for those who are apart from the gathering together of the body of Christ Jesus in His bride the Church’s communal worship.] ...

Now “During the Old Testament the full joy of worshipping God was possible only in [that] one city, in [that] one building because the sacrifices could be offered only in the Temple of Jerusalem. [Because of Jesus our High Priest] today our worship is not limited to any one place. We are free to worship God anywhere. Nevertheless, our churches hold a special place in our

hearts. There we have been baptized, confirmed, and married. There we have witnessed these events in the lives of our loved ones. There we have heard words of comfort [following] the deaths of family members and friends. From the pulpits we have heard God's word. At the altar we have receive Christ's true body and blood, which was given and shed for our forgiveness. We too, [with the Psalmist] can say "how lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty." [And while] it is true that we can worship God anywhere [let it be our prayer that we may] never deprive ourselves through our own negligence or indifference of the joy of joining fellow believers in God's house. God does not need us to come to His house but we need to be there [whether our heart pines to be there or not].^[9] Scripture says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near;"^[10] This is an encouragement and so is Psalm 84, for Psalm 84 promises that for those who are separated from gathering together in worship out of necessity, duty, or the care of neighbour, that for such as these God promises to be with them bringing healing and blessings for their weary souls even in the midst of sorrow, weeping, longing and pining..."

- <https://lutheran-church-regina.com/blogs/post/close-to-god-psalm-84-sermon-february-prayer-service>
Rev. Ted Giese, Lead Pastor, Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Regina Saskatchewan Canada. Includes a link to hear the sermon.

Hebrews 2:14-18; RCL, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 or Hebrews 2:14-18

(1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16); RCL, the same reading)

Hebrews 2:10-18 was the RCL Reading for First Sunday after Christmas in Lectionary Year A.

"Hebrews 2:10-18 paints a powerful picture of the significance of Jesus' incarnation that highlights the reality of suffering on the journey of faithfulness to God.

The passage is framed by reference to Jesus' sufferings as a human being (Hebrews 2:10, 18). This image of Jesus is a striking shift from the descriptions of the divine, exalted Jesus that dominate Hebrews until 2:9, when the author clarifies that Jesus has been crowned with divine glory and honor precisely because he suffered death. This sets the stage for Hebrews 2:10-18, which shows how Jesus' incarnation makes it possible for other human beings to share in divine glory.

Hebrews 2:10 presents the key claim of the passage: that the sovereign, Creator God brings human beings to salvation through the suffering of the divine Son who became incarnate in Jesus. The idea that it is fitting for God to accomplish the divine purposes for the world by becoming a human being and suffering death (verse 14) would seem outrageous to some audiences, both ancient and modern. But it is at the heart of the Christian gospel, which is expressed in condensed form in this passage..."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4346
[Jennifer V. Pietz](#) Religion Instructor, Augsburg University, Minneapolis, Minn.

Warning Against Neglecting Salvation Verses 1-4

The Founder of Salvation Verses 5-18

¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.^[b] That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,^[c] ¹² saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” Cited from Ps. 22:22

¹³ And again,

“I will put my trust in him.” [Ps. 18:2; Isa. 8:17; 12:2]

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.” Cited from Isa. 8:18

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

- a. [Hebrews 2:7](#) Some manuscripts insert *and set him over the works of your hands*
- b. [Hebrews 2:11](#) Greek *all are of one*
- c. [Hebrews 2:11](#) Or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*; also verse [12](#)

Heb 2:10-18 uses a collage of images to show who Jesus is and what it means to follow him. There are four pictures in this collage. Each one helps us think about where we have been, where we are, and where we might be going.

First, Hebrews pictures Jesus as the pioneer of salvation (2:10). Central to the image is that a pioneer makes a way forward for others. Connotations include a sense of courage and adventure... Hebrews pictures Jesus as the pioneer who opens the way to God. This is indeed a vision of a better life. Hebrews even says that it is "glory." But at the center of this glory is God, the Creator of us all. This is what God wants, namely, us to be in relationship with him. That is what Jesus the pioneer does, he opens the way to life with God.

Second, Hebrews adds a picture: Jesus is our brother (2:12-13). Rather than depicting us as people seeking life in a new future, it refers to those who need a place to belong in the family. Jesus is not "ashamed" to call us his brothers and sisters...

Scrutiny will show that Jesus might have any number of good reasons to be ashamed about who we are. So if Jesus calls us his brothers and sisters, it is not because we are so impressive. Being called one of his siblings is an act of grace. It offers us a sense of dignity and fellowship in the family.

A **third** picture is that of Jesus as a liberator (2:14-16)... Here the need is not for acceptance but for liberation... We are drawn into situations where evil bends our wills. Despite the fear, we cannot break free. Here Jesus intrudes into the situation to bring deliverance. The weapon he uses against the force of evil is the love of God, which he conveys through his own suffering and death. Jesus' crucifixion is confrontational. It shows that God is not willing to let the world remain under the dominion of other powers. In the crucified and risen Christ, God confronts evil with love and deception with truth. This is what sets people free.

The **fourth** image in the collage is of Jesus the high priest (2:17-18). Here people are pictured as sinners in need of atonement. By his suffering and death, Jesus conveys the sacrificial love that restores people in relationship to God. The "altar" where Jesus offered his sacrifice was Golgotha. The sacrificial victim was Jesus himself, rather than an ordinary lamb. And the reason Jesus offers himself is to convey to us the love that can bring us back into relationship with God..."

➤ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=20 **Craig R. Koester**

Professor and Asher O. and Carrie Nasby Chair of New Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Luke 2:22-32 (33-40); RCL, Matthew 5:1-12 or Luke 22:22-40

(Matthew 5:13-20; RCL, the same reading)

Luke 2:22-40 was the RCL reading for the first Sunday after Christmas in Lectionary Year B.

"...In St. Luke's account, it is now forty days after Jesus' birth. After eight days, Jesus had been circumcised and named in accordance with Jewish law. Now, thirty-two days later, his parents are again performing their duty as pious Jews by returning to the Temple, this time in order to offer a sacrifice and to consecrate their child to the Lord.

They must have been in a solemn mood that day, full of reverence and expectancy, the way many young parents in our congregations when their first child is to be baptized. It's not hard to imagine, therefore, the quiet procession they must have made to the great Temple, their awe at entering its holy courts, their nervousness as they prepared to sacrifice according to the law.

Nor is it difficult to imagine their reaction as an old man comes forward out of the shadows to scoop up their child into his arms and prophesy about him. Startled at first, perhaps, even a bit frightened by the old man's ecstatic face, Mary and Joseph yield to him because they sense the Lord's Spirit upon him. Hearing Simeon's prophecy, they are reminded of the events of the previous weeks and months when angels and shepherds had intruded into their lives to foretell the greatness of their Son..."

➤ <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=1510>

David Lose Senior Pastor, Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth Verses 39-40 See Luke 2:40-52, the reading for the 2nd Sunday after Christmas, Lutheran Lectionary Year A or 1st Sunday after Christmas, (RCL) Lectionary Year C

³⁹ And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple Verses 41-52

- a. [Luke 2:29](#) Or *bondservant*
- b. [Luke 2:37](#) Or *as a widow for eighty-four years*

“The presentation in Jerusalem is motivated by specific requirements of the law of Moses. According to Leviticus 12, after a woman gives birth to a son, she is impure for forty days. At the end of that period, she is to bring an offering to the temple, which the priest offers as a sacrifice, effecting her purification. In addition, Exodus 13:2, 12, 15 state that every first-born male (which “opens the womb”), whether human or animal, “belongs” to the Lord (cf. 34:20). While (clean) animals (Leviticus 27:27) would be sacrificed, first-born sons needed to be redeemed (Exodus 13:12-15). According to Numbers 3:46-51, the redemption involved the payment of five shekels to the priesthood. However, according to another tradition in Numbers 3:11-13; 8:16-18, the tribe of the Levites takes the place of the first-born sons of Israel as the Lord’s possession. Thus the biblical notion of redemption included the idea that the first-born son “belongs” to the Lord in a special way and is dedicated to serve him (as the Levites were also dedicated to serve him).

Luke has apparently taken this old idea of the first-born son being dedicated to God’s service and made it fruitful for his narrative. The Torah contains no requirement that the first-born son be presented at the temple. However, Luke alludes to the story of Samuel. When Hannah, who had no children, prayed to God for a son, she vowed that, if she had a son, she would give him to God for all his days (1 Samuel 1:11). And indeed, after Samuel was born, Hannah brought him to the temple, and he was “lent” to the Lord for life (1 Samuel 1:24-28). It is clear that Mary in Luke takes the role of Hannah (cf. Luke 1:46-55 with 1 Samuel 1:11; 2:1-10) while Jesus takes the role of Samuel (cf. Luke 2:40, 52 with 1 Samuel 2:26). Thus when Joseph and Mary present Jesus to the Lord in Jerusalem, they are in effect dedicating his life to God (no redemption money is given). Jesus will be “holy to the Lord” (Luke 2:23). With these words Luke subtly alters the language of Exodus 13:2, 12 from a command to consecrate (*hagiazein*) the first-born to God to a declaration about Jesus. Luke’s wording is reminiscent of Luke 1:35, where the angel Gabriel tells Mary that her son will be “holy” and will be called the “Son of God,” because he will be conceived by the Holy Spirit. Luke’s wording is perhaps also (though more distantly) reminiscent of other stories that speak of Jesus as a “holy one” with a special

relationship to God (e.g., Mark 1:24). The story thus sets the stage for Jesus' life dedicated fully to his heavenly Father (Luke 2:49)..."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2258 [Stephen Hultgren](#) Lecturer in New Testament and Director of ALITE. Australian Lutheran College, North Adelaide, Australia

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”



- *Agnus Day* appears with the permission of <https://www.agnusday.org/>

“After an incorrigible man died and went to hell, his sad fate worried his friends. When they visited him in hell, his misery touched them even more deeply. So the man’s friends rattled hell’s gates, shouting to whomever might be listening, “Let him out! Let him out!” Their pleas, however, went unanswered. Hell’s great iron doors remained tightly shut.

The man’s friends next summoned a dazzling array of rich, powerful and famous people. All of them stood at hell’s gates, shouting out a variety of reasons why Satan should let the man out of his lonely torture. Some claimed that the evil one had not followed due process when he condemned the man. Others appealed to Satan’s sense of fair play and compassion. The massive iron gates, however, remained unmoved.

In desperation the tormented man’s friends summoned his pastor. When he approached hell’s gates, he shouted, “Let him out. This man wasn’t really such a bad guy, after all. He contributed some money to our church building fund and once even worked at a food pantry for us. Let him out.” Hell’s gates, however, didn’t budge.

Eventually all the condemned man’s discouraged friends and supporters left him. At that point the man’s old father appeared at hell’s gates. He stood there, hunched over and weak. He was only able to softly whisper, “Let *me* in. Let *me* in.” At once hell’s massive gates swung open and the condemned man was free.”

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/advent-5a/?type=lectionary_epistle Doug Bratt

The Matthew Challenge

New month, new goal to finish your handwritten copy of Matthew - Chapter 7-9.