

***The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord - February 2, 2025
DEDICATED TO THE LORD***

Prayer

Lord, we thank you that you have called us by name at our Baptism, as you called Samuel by name to become your prophet and priest.

AMEN

Introducton

Today's reading is included in the lectionary because it mirrors the Gospel reading, where we see the Christ child being brought to the temple so that, as the firstborn male, the sacrifice of redemption could be made.

Family Life

Whenever you look a passage, as in today's first reading from the book of Samuel, you need to understand the context, what was going on before and after the portion that we read. That's especially important to the understanding of today's reading.

Before today's text, we learn about Samuel's family situation. And remember, this is descriptive – what was, and not necessarily what should be. Samuel's father, Elkanah (El – cane – a) had two wives. The first was Peninnah (Pen – in – ah) whom the Lord has blessed with

The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord - February 2, 2025
DEDICATED TO THE LORD

children. The other was Samuel's mother, Hannah, who up until she has Samuel was barren. At that time, a lack of children was taken as a mark of God's disfavor and Peninnah was quick to remind Hannah of that fact.

Elkanah wasn't much better. We see in verse 8, that he made this very awkward attempt to comfort his wife by saying "Why are you downhearted just because you have no children? You have me – isn't that better than having ten sons?" One of the ways you can know that the scriptures are true is that it's hard to believe that people can say such dumb things. Seems like husbands haven't changed much over the past 3,000 years.

You may remember that several weeks ago, I mentioned in the sermon about the tenth plague, the killing of the firstborn, as God was encouraging Pharaoh to free the Israelite slaves. One part of the covenant the God made with his people at that time was that the firstborn male was to either be dedicated to the Lord or redeemed.

The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord - February 2, 2025 ***DEDICATED TO THE LORD***

In the case of Samuel, even though the family provided the prescribed redemption sacrifice, Samuel was still left at the temple to be dedicated to the work of the Lord because of the additional promise or oath that his mother had made (verse 11):

she made this vow: "O Lord of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the Lord, his hair will never be cut

Life and Ministry

It's also helpful to understand the "when" of a passage. Samuel was born around 1,120 B.C., approximately 3 to 4 centuries after the time of Moses and Joshua. Since it was before the building of the temple in Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was kept at Shiloh, which is why Samuel and his parents went to worship.

If any of you have seen the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, you'll know that the Ark of the Covenant held the stone tablets upon which the Lord had recorded the Ten Commandments. The priests and Levites took

The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord - February 2, 2025
DEDICATED TO THE LORD

care of this most holy object. Once the Temple was built, it was placed in the Holy of Holies and was lost when the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. This may seem like a tragedy, but let me remind you of the role and purpose of the law:

The Law was never meant to be permanent (Gal 3:24):

So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

Our relationship with God isn't restored by keeping the

law (Gal 2:16): *yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

Because Christ fulfilled the Law (Matt 5:17):

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord - February 2, 2025 ***DEDICATED TO THE LORD***

Samuel also holds a unique position amount the people of the Old Testament. He held multiple offices or positions over his lifetime – seer, priest, judge, prophet and military leader. In fact, he was the last of the judges over Israel and the first of the prophets. And even though in this role as prophet he did his best to convince the Israelites to continue with a Theocracy (administered by the judges), they clamored for a Monarchy, and in his role as prophet he was used by God to anoint the first two kings of the Jews – Saul and David.

Foreshadowing of Christ

We know that our Lord is the eternal **King** of the Jews and was identified as such from his birth – according to the Wise Men who sought him out – to his death – as written on this cross by Pilate.

The Lord is also the ultimate fulfillment of several of the offices that were held by Samuel.

Even though many were expecting the Messiah to be a **military leader**, Jesus was not such during His 30+ years on earth. However, Christ is often time referred to in the Old Testament as the Captain or leader of the Lord's army, for example by Joshua (Joshua 5:14)

The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord - February 2, 2025
DEDICATED TO THE LORD

And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped^[a] and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"

While Samuel was indeed the first of those called prophets in the Old Testament, Christ is the final and ultimate **prophet**. We read last week where He stood in the synagogue and read from Isaiah (61:1-2a):

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor . . .

He indeed could proclaim the Good News that by His death on the cross, the penalty for disobedience to the Law has been paid, that your sins are forgiven, and that because He has been raised from the dead, you have the sure promise of eternal life with Him.

The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord - February 2, 2025
DEDICATED TO THE LORD

Samuel was also **priest** in Shiloh, serving as an intercessor between the people and the Lord. As the writer of Hebrews proclaims (Heb 4:14-16):

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need

and by Saint Paul in his letter to the church at Rome (Rom 8:34)

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us

So, in both his person and his work, Samuel, whose name means “God has heard,” served as a foreshadowing of Christ, who is our Prophet, Priest, and King for all eternity.

The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord - February 2, 2025
DEDICATED TO THE LORD

In contrast to many today, who see the Old Testament as irrelevant, Lutherans view the Old Testament as valuable, as it always points forward to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

May God continue to bless those that hear these words and produce faith in the promises of God that have been proclaimed in them.

AMEN