

Rejection of Ritual The Presentation of the Lord Saturday, February 2, 2019 Mal 3:1-4; Heb 2:14-18; **Lk 2:22-40** (Jesus believes in wholehearted gift of self. He is not going to be exchanged for two turtledoves.)

So we come to the Presentation of Jesus, and I will remind you of the **reason for this ritual**. In the time of Moses, God punished the Egyptians for not allowing his people to go by taking as a ransom all the firstborn male children and animals from the families and flocks of the Egyptians. Therefore God said to the Israelites **the firstborn male of your flocks and your families belong to me and must be redeemed**. This is a worthy idea that actually all of us belong to God. But in this particular culture and tradition the problem was the vast majority people had very little to use to redeem a child, for example, and therefore they watered-down the redemptive price, so to speak, to a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, which the poorest family could afford. So on the one hand, we have this idea that these children really belong to God and should serve God, which is all very true. You will remember that Hannah took her son to Eli in the temple, Samuel that was, and said, “Here he is; he is my firstborn. Now he is yours. Raise him up as a prophet of the temple.” **So on the one hand, we have this idea of dedication to God, very good; but on the other hand, we have the idea of buying someone back out of this so-called bondage for only a pair of turtledoves. Well that is not saying too much about the value of people, but of course they had no money, so maybe it was valuable to them.**

At any rate, Jesus, although he was redeemed technically and legally, did not buy into the whole process, because at this very moment he stays behind, he does not go home with his parents. **He stays in the temple doing his Father’s business**, and by his Father he didn’t mean Joseph. He already knew he did not belong to Joseph at twelve years old. He had this knowledge that God gave him, this intimate knowledge of the Father, and so **although technically he no longer had to**

serve God in the temple, he chose to anyway, and distinguished himself far beyond that of Samuel, for example, as a prophet of the Lord God Most High.

So this is the part of the story that is so very interesting, that at this point **Jesus is already rejecting something of the whole history and tradition that he is born into**. His parents go through it, but he doesn't. And then when the parents discover his absence, and they full of anxiety return to Jerusalem looking for him, then finally find him, and are exasperated, he explains to them in a way they can't understand who he really is. He said, "Did you not know I would be about my Father's business?" Now the Scripture says Mary was troubled by this; that's putting it rather mildly. I think devastated would be a more appropriate term, **Jesus already showing that he doesn't believe in rituals. What he believes in is wholehearted gift of self. He is not going to be exchanged for two turtledoves**. His life is much more valuable than that. And that life is going to be given wholeheartedly to the Father, and it's going to start right now. He is not even going home, because he already is home in his Father's house.