

The First Sunday after Christmas

Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Which part is missing?

***Answer:** Address: "O God, our Maker and Redeemer." Reason: "You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature." Petition: "Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us." Ending: "through Jesus Christ, our Lord..." There is no separate purpose clause; the petition itself names the hope, life in Christ.*

2. The collect calls creation "wonderful" and the incarnation "more wondrous." Why would restoring us be greater than making us?

***Answer:** God made us by His word, but restoring us cost His Son, who took on our flesh and later died in it. Sin had ruined what God made, and in the incarnation God repairs it from the inside.*

3. What does the collect name as the means by which God restored human nature?

***Answer:** The incarnation of His Son. God did not repair us from a distance; the Son took our nature on Himself.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Luke 2:22-40

22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord **23** (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") **24** and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. **26** And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. **27** And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, **28** he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, **29** "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; **30** for my eyes have seen your salvation **31** that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, **32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. **34** And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and

rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed **35** (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, **37** and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. **38** And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. **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.

1. Why did Mary and Joseph offer "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons" (v. 24)?

Answer: The Law allowed a poor family to offer birds when it could not afford a lamb (Leviticus 12:8). The Holy Family was poor, and the child they carried was Himself the Lamb of God.

2. Simeon calls the baby "your salvation" (v. 30). What does it mean that he holds salvation in his arms?

Answer: Salvation is a Person, not an idea. Simeon can depart in peace because God's promise to him is fulfilled in Jesus.

3. Simeon calls Jesus "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (v. 32). Why would that surprise some people?

Answer: Many expected the Messiah to be for Israel alone. Simeon says He is for all peoples, which includes us.

4. What do Simeon's words to Mary in verses 34-35 point ahead to?

Answer: Jesus will divide people: some will fall by rejecting Him, and many will rise by believing. The sword piercing Mary's soul is her grief at the cross.

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: "Made Himself to be like us" matches the baby carried to the temple (v. 22) and the child who "grew and became strong" (v. 40). "Redeemer" matches Anna speaking of Him "to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" (v. 38). "Ever be alive in Him" matches Simeon, who can "depart in peace" once he has seen God's salvation (vv. 29-30). Any two, well explained, are enough.

2. Today's Epistle says, "God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Galatians 4:4-5). Where does Luke 2 show Jesus "under the law"?

Answer: His parents do everything for Him "according to the Law of Moses" (vv. 22-24, 39). He is placed under the Law as a baby so that He can redeem us who are under it.

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The First Article. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean? I believe that **God has made me and all creatures**; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true. **The Second Article.** And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended

into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. **What does this mean?** I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, **who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil;** not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Cross-reference. "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth... and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Colossians 1:16, 20)

1. Luther's First Article says God "has made me." His Second Article says Jesus "has redeemed me." How does the collect join the two?
Answer: It calls God "our Maker and Redeemer" in one breath. The God who made us is the God who buys us back, and Colossians 1 shows the Son at work in both.
2. Luther calls Jesus "true man, born of the Virgin Mary." Where does Luke 2 show His true humanity?
Answer: He is carried, offered for, held in Simeon's arms, and He grows and becomes strong (vv. 22, 28, 40).
3. Luther says Jesus redeemed me "that I may be His own." How does Simeon show what belonging to Him means?
Answer: Simeon calls himself God's "servant" and can die in peace, since he has seen the Savior. One who belongs to Christ need not fear death.

Parent note: the question they may ask. "If Jesus is God, why was He brought to the temple to do what the Law required?" He did not need it for Himself. He placed Himself under the Law for us, so that His obedience would count for us (Galatians 4:4-5). The child offered for with two birds is Himself the offering for the world.

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: Answers will vary. Example: "O God, You made us, and Your Son became a child to save us. Let us see Your salvation as Simeon did, that we may depart in peace when our time comes; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you by becoming a child like you?

Answer: He took on a body like mine so that He could keep God's Law for me and die for me. In Him I have life that never ends.