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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

### **The First Sunday of Zemene Sibket**

#### **Liturgical Readings:**

**Hebrew. 1: 1— end; 2nd Pet. 3:1—10; Acts 3:17 – end**

**Ps. 144:7**

**John 1:44 - end**

**The Anaphora of Athanasios**

### ***“We Preach the Savior Son ” — A Reflective Article on John 1:44–end***

Beloved in Christ,

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God our Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh, who came to dwell among us and reveal the fullness of divine mercy and truth. Today, as the Church presents the calling of the first disciples in John 1:44–end, we are drawn into the eternal proclamation: *“We preach the Savior Son.”* This is no mere human message but the declaration of salvation itself, promised from the foundations of the world, foreshadowed in the prophets, and fulfilled in Christ.

In the opening chapter of John, we see the eternal Word calling ordinary men, such as Philip and Nathanael, into the service of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. The Ethiopian fathers interpret this as a sign of God’s covenantal initiative: God calls, prepares, and equips His instruments. Like the psalmist who cried, **“Show me Your mercy, O Lord, and grant me Your salvation”** (Ps. 77:2), the disciples responded to the divine invitation with faith, leaving their nets and their familiarity to proclaim the long-awaited Messiah.

Indeed, the Son of God is the fulfillment of the promises given to the fathers, for Scripture has long testified: **“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel”** (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). From the far reaches of Bethlehem foretold by Micah (Mic. 5:2) to the voice crying in the wilderness (Hos. 11:1), every prophetic utterance pointed to the coming of the Redeemer, the one whose light would break the darkness: **“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light”** (Isa. 9:1; Matt. 4:16). The apostles, recognizing this, could boldly testify, as St. Peter later did in Acts 3:17–26, that repentance and faith in Christ open the doors of life, fulfilling God’s eternal covenant.

Yet, our proclamation is not a novelty; it is rooted deeply in the narrative of salvation history. From the psalmist who exclaims, **“Blessed be the Lord my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle”** (Ps. 144:7-8), to the sufferings and righteous endurance of the righteous foretold in the prophets (Isa. 53:1–12), we see the divine pattern: the Messiah would enter the world not as a conqueror of earthly armies, but as the suffering servant, obedient unto death, even death on a cross (John 19:23–30). In Him, every promise of God is made certain, every foreshadowing fulfilled, and every psalmic cry answered: **“My soul thirsts for God, for**

The Ethiopian theological vision emphasizes that the Word of God is not merely historical but continuously operative. As Hebrews teaches: **“In many and various ways God spoke in time past to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days has spoken to us by His Son”** (Heb. 1:1–2). This Word, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, calls the Church to faithful witness. Like the psalmist, we can say, **“My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast”** (Ps. 57:7), for our hope is founded upon the risen Christ.

The mission entrusted to us is twofold: to proclaim the Son of God and to embody His servant life. St. Peter reminds us: **“Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps, who committed no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth”** (1 Pet. 2:21–22). We preach not only with words but with deeds that reflect His humility, patience, and love. St. Paul instructs the Church: **“We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake”** (2 Cor. 4:5). This is the essence of apostolic witness: to testify that salvation is in Christ alone, received by faith (Rom. 1:16–17) and lived in obedience (1 Tim. 4:2–5).

Christ’s victory over sin and death, foretold in Zechariah (Zech. 11:1) and Isaiah (Isa. 42:1–4), realized in the resurrection (Matt. 28:1–10; Mark 16:16–18), is the cornerstone of our preaching. Through Him, the faithful experience God’s refuge and strength, as the psalmist declares, **“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved”** (Ps. 46:5). This is the same Christ who ascended and promised to send the Spirit to empower His disciples (Acts 1:1–11), ensuring that the proclamation of salvation would reach all nations.

In the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, preaching the Savior Son encompasses the fullness of human and divine participation. From the angelic annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:31) to the declaration in Nazareth (Luke 4:17–21), from the public crucifixion to the empty tomb, every event manifests God’s plan. The Word became flesh, walked among us, suffered, died, and rose again to bring life to the world, fulfilling the words of Isaiah: **“He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities”** (Isa. 53:5). In every action of the Church—liturgy, sacrament, and witness—the Ethiopian fathers see a continuation of this proclamation: the Son of God, Savior of the world, is present among us.

Beloved, to preach the Savior Son is to join the chorus of saints and prophets, apostles and martyrs, who have testified to the glory of Christ across time. It is to call all hearts to faith, to repentance, and to trust in the mercy of God. As St. Peter exhorts, the preaching of the Gospel is urgent, faithful, and uncompromising (2 Peter 3:1–10). We preach with joy, for we testify not of a distant hope but of a living Christ, whose light dispels darkness, whose Word transforms hearts, and whose cross reconciles the world.

Let us, therefore, with unwavering devotion, declare in every place and season: *“We preach the Savior Son.”* May our lives reflect the Word incarnate, our lips proclaim His mercy, and our hearts rejoice in the eternal victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the faithful and true witness. Amen.