

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Christmas 1C
December 26, 2021
Luke 2:22-40

Depart in Peace

"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." (Luke 2:29-32 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

Forty days after the birth of Christ, Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple to offer the required sacrifice to the Lord. As they enter, there's nothing to set them apart from anyone else. There are no special effects, no shining robes, no halos, nothing to distinguish them from all the other families there that day.

Yet, Simeon recognized them because the Holy Spirit gave him eyes to see. In addition, God had promised him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. And Simeon clung to that promise and trusted that what God had said would happen. So on that particular day, Simeon saw that promise fulfilled. Upon seeing that Infant and His mother, he speaks those Spirit-inspired words we know so well:

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

God grant that, like Simeon, we too endure in faith to the end. For Simeon was ready to die in peace, for he had seen his salvation, his Savior, with his own eyes. He could "depart in peace" because he had seen the One who would save him from his sins. He had seen with his own eyes God-in-the-flesh who would give him peace with God. And because God had kept His promise, Simeon could die in peace knowing his sins were forgiven for the sake of the Child he held in his arms. He could depart in peace because he saw with his own eyes the very One who would offer the supreme and final sacrifice for his sin and the sin of the whole world. So not only had Simeon seen *his* Savior, but this salvation, this Savior, would be for both Israel and Gentile. This Savior who was there in the Temple would be revealed to Jew and Gentile alike.

Yet, when Simeon uttered these Spirit-inspired words, Jesus had not yet died for the sins of the world. That was 30-some years hence. But that didn't keep Simeon from seeing his salvation as though it were already accomplished. For in seeing Jesus, Simeon saw the result of Jesus' coming into the flesh - his salvation. He saw in Mary's baby boy the Savior promised long ago to Adam and Eve. He saw in this infant the Messiah promised to Israel throughout the ages. For

God's promise is so sure that it's as good as done, even if it's in the future, God's Word is so certain that it's done in eternity, even before it may be done in time.

So, while Simeon was ready to die, Joseph and Mary marveled at what they'd just heard. And, as they were thinking about that, Simeon addressed Mary, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." Indeed, it would come to pass just as Simeon had said. The poor in spirit, the despised, the lowly, would be raised up by this Child. Repentant sinners would find their sins forgiven. And those in lofty positions would be brought down low. Those who refused to acknowledge their sin, those who thought they could stand before God on their own merits, would be knocked off their high horse. This Prince of Peace would bring a sword which would divide even family members from one another. For while everyone seems to get sentimental over the adorable Child, He would grow to be despised and rejected by His own people He had come to save. He would be scorned by those who refused to believe either in their need for a Savior or in this Child as their Savior. And that rejection would ultimately find itself at the cross as Jesus' enemies crucified Him. And as Mary was there, looking at her Son die an agonizing death, her soul would most certainly be pierced. As the spear was thrust into Jesus' side so that blood and water came flowing out, Mary's heart must have broken beyond measure.

Yet, even upon hearing this, Mary and Joseph still were not yet ready to depart. For as they were pondering all that they had seen and heard, as it had been told them, Anna came in. We're told "she is very old." When she saw Jesus, she "gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." She too had seen her salvation. Through the Holy Spirit, she too knew Jesus to be the One to redeem Israel from her sin. He would pay the ransom price to buy back all sinners from bondage to sin. He would shed His holy, precious blood for the forgiveness of sins. By His resurrection, He would free all people from the grip of death. And though we're not specifically told, I'm sure Anna, too, was ready to die.

So finally, when Joseph and Mary "had performed all things according to the law of the Lord," they were ready to depart. They had done all that the law required. They had presented the required sacrifice to redeem their firstborn as the law said. So "they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth."

God grant that we all, old and young, take our cue from Simeon and Anna. Let us trust in God's promises and be sustained by them every day of our lives, even as we too long to see Jesus. For though we have not seen Jesus in the flesh, we still have His Word and promises. We also have the signs that He has given to show us the salvation He brings.

So, we sing the song of Simeon, the Nunc Dimittis, after receiving our Lord's Body and Blood in the Holy Communion. Like Simeon we *have seen* God's salvation. We behold our Savior in the bread and wine. We receive Him for the forgiveness of sins and so we are ready to depart - down from the mountain, out of God's House, into the valley of the world, and ultimately to a

peaceful death. For having seen our salvation, having our sins forgiven, having been set at peace with God, we too are ready to depart in peace. The Son of God has set us free. We need not fear death because we are no longer in bondage to death. We are no longer strangers to God, but we are heirs of the Father's salvation through His Son. When we believe in the Son, and all that He has done for us, we have everything the Son has given us - our sins are pardoned; our life is now in Christ. Because of Jesus we live in His peace no matter our calling in life.

So, my friends, depart in peace. By God's grace, you have all been brought to saving faith in the Christ Child as your Savior. Depart in peace to live in the world as sheep among wolves. Depart in peace as the New Year approaches because you know that your Savior is with you every step of the way. Yes, depart in peace, because Jesus has come and has taken on your flesh so that you have the gift of comfort and redemption through Him. God grant each of you such peace, comfort, and joy this day and forever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener