

## First Sunday of Christmas (12-27-20)

Luke 2: 22 – 40

Pastor Arndt

***<sup>22</sup> When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”<sup>[b]</sup>), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”<sup>[c]</sup>***

***<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup> Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:***

***<sup>29</sup> “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you may now dismiss<sup>[d]</sup> your servant in peace.***

***<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation,***

***<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:***

***<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and the glory of your people Israel.”***

***<sup>33</sup> The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup> so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”***

***<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup> and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.<sup>[e]</sup> She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. <sup>38</sup> Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.***

***<sup>39</sup> When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.***

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus

We do not celebrate Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup> because we believe Jesus was born on that day. We celebrate Christmas near the winter solstice because... well, it is the winter solstice! The weather is cold. The days are short. It is against this bleak backdrop that we celebrate “the light that shines in the darkness” Jesus Christ.

We need this celebration of light. Adults have been laboring for the greater part of a year to plant, produce, and harvest. Children have been hard at work with their studies. We treasure the time when Christmas dismisses us from our labors and gives us a time of celebration and rest.

In our lesson for today we are introduced to Simeon. He is also waiting for a dismissal, not from a job that lasts from 9 to 5 or a semester of schooling. Simeon views his entire life as an act of service. He

addresses God as “Lord”. Simeon acknowledges that God is his eternal master. Simeon, for his part, is a servant. From the moment he is born to the moment he will die; Simeon stands at attention in service to God.

As Simeon contemplates his life of service, there is a problem that emerges. God’s law dictates what kind of a servant Simeon *should be*. That same law also acts as a mirror and shows Simeon what kind of a servant he *has been*. There is a sinful difference between the two. As a result, Simeon is left searching and hoping for something.

Luke records that Simeon was awaiting “*the consolation*” of Israel. The Greek word used here for consolation is “*Paraclete*”. Literally the word means “*a voice that calls alongside.*” Like all of us, Simeon was awaiting God’s promise of a voice that accompanies our lives and gives us the answer and comfort of a Savior. Simeon now has the blessed experience of holding Jesus the Savior in his arms. Simeon opens his lips and gives his testimony of what the Lord is accomplishing.

“*Sovereign Lord, as you promised, you are dismissing your servant in peace.*” Like a soldier who is released from duty, the Lord is dismissing Simeon from a lifetime of service. Because of the gift of a Savior, Simeon is dismissed in peace.

The word “peace” literally means to “bind things together.” Jesus the Savior has come to provide Simeon with the perfection that God’s law demands. The Savior will also die for Simeon to completely pay for his sins. In Jesus, we find this blessed space where all of God’s demands are completed and perfected. Our severed relationships are bound together with forgiveness. Our relationship with God is repaired and bound together with the forgiveness of Christ. God does not dismiss Simeon until he has found this peace that comes only from Jesus.

These words of Simeon come to us at a perfect time. No matter what age you are, God is preparing to dismiss you in peace.

We can start here with our time of *worship*. Even our worship is tainted with sin. Our minds wander and our hearts become disengaged. But God blesses our worship with Christ. In just a few minutes you will have the opportunity to come forward and receive your Savior’s body and blood in the Sacrament. There, God joins together his will for you in the law with the perfection that is given to you in the Gospel. What peace it gives us to know that we are dismissed from our worship with the forgiveness and power of Christ!

In just a few days we will bid farewell to the *year 2020*. This has been a year of challenges. Without question the greatest challenges that we have faced have been the result of our own sin. What a blessing it is to know that God will not dismiss us from this year without first bringing us the peace of Jesus.

Most importantly, God is preparing to dismiss us at the *close of our lives*. The all-powerful God has prepared salvation for all people to see. Simeon finds God’s salvation as he holds the infant Jesus in the Temple. We find God’s salvation as we listen to the Word and joyfully receive the Sacrament of the Altar. The effect on each of us is the same.

The all-powerful God dismisses us as his servants with the peace of Jesus! May this peace of Jesus cheer your heart in even the darkest times! – Amen