
Jesus Presented at the Temple

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.

The Return to Nazareth

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.
Luke 2:22-40 (ESV)

I greet you with, grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit who lives within us as believers, empowering us.

Jesus is brought to the Temple

We are at the First Sunday after Christmas, and in the gospel lesson, Jesus is brought to the temple. This would have been at least 40 days after the birth, which is the time of purification, according to the Law of Moses. The child, Jesus, is brought to the temple to be presented to the Lord. You see, every first born male was presented to Jehovah as belonging to the Lord as a priest of the Lord. Since the priesthood was of the tribe of Levi, those of other tribes, Jesus was from Judah, were redeemed or bought back from the Lord at a determined cost of five shekels. This redemption was a memorial of the sparing of the first born in the Exodus from Egypt. You would dedicate the child to the Lord, complete the rite of circumcision, and offer a sacrifice. A lamb was offered, in the case of those that could afford it, or a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons, for

those of lesser means, like Joseph and Mary in our lesson. Joseph and Mary undoubtedly went expecting what they had seen before. It would have been in the public court. Other families were there too, waiting for the priests to receive their offerings. But what happened was very different than expected. You see, the Holy Spirit has revealed to Simeon who this child is. Simeon, is a righteous and devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel, which is a title for Messiah. The Holy Spirit was upon him, and taking the child in his arms, blesses the child, and proclaims a startling revelation, and both Joseph and Mary marvel about what is said, even though they have already seen the miraculous, this too, is more than they could have imagined, as more is revealed about Jesus. Simeon says, “**my eyes have seen your salvation**” Simeon is holding the salvation of the entire world in his arms. This child is for the rising and falling of many. What about you? Are your eyes open? Do you know the salvation of the Lord? Are you to rise or fall? Your eternal destiny is in Jesus, either to your rise or to your fall. How are you living for the Lord Jesus? Jesus is calling to you. He has mighty plans for you. May we hear from the Lord.

Simeon proclaims

These six poetic lines from the Holy Spirit through Simeon is what we call the Nunc Dimittis, which is the first two words from the Latin translation. We have that as part of our communion liturgy, in settings one through four of Divine Service. It comes in the service after we have received the real presence, the Lord's body and blood in the sacrament. You see, we have seen His salvation, a light to the Gentiles, and glory to your people Israel. This message that the Spirit gives, is for the Gentiles, which is everyone not a Jew, and to the Jews, showing that God's salvation is for all people. Salvation although, is very specific and to be received individually, through Jesus, no one else can save. Acts 4 verse 12, it states of Jesus, “¹² **And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**” Acts 4:12 (ESV) There are not many doors that open to heaven, or many paths to God, only one door, only one path, Jesus, as He himself declared, saying, “**... “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (ESV)** Without trust in Jesus, surrender to Him as Lord and Savior, who is the very God in human flesh, our redemption, you have neither the Father, nor God, and your eyes are closed. You are blind, and do not have the light, but live in darkness, knowing not the truth that is of Jesus. This is the true confession of our faith, of the scriptures, and what Simeon proclaimed as he held the child, Jesus. Simeon is like the angels that herald the good news, proclaiming. Anna the prophetess, in our lesson, is like the shepherds that respond to the good news by spreading the message. Our lesson says Anna gives thanks and speaks of him to all who were waiting for redemption, testifying, sharing the good news of the gospel, a testimony of what our lives are to be like.

Rising and Falling

You rise or fall on Jesus. To those who reject His message, He is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offense, that crushes all who reject. Peter proclaims that saying, ⁷ **So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”** ⁸ and **“A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.”** They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹ **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** ¹⁰ **Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.** 1 Peter 2:7-10 (ESV) God’s people by faith in Jesus, chosen, priests, holy, given new life to live through Him as He works through you, living the righteous devout life, like Simeon and like Anna, hearing and receiving from the Holy Spirit as He comes through the word, through the sacraments. Anna has been living her faith, for some 84 years. We do not know how old Simeon is, but he was righteous and devout, a reference to his salvation and living his faith.

A Sword will Pierce

The reference in our lesson about a sword will pierce; three possible interpretations are set forth. The piercing referring to Mary’s grief seeing the suffering of Jesus, or that she and the disciples misunderstood Jesus destiny, and lastly, that the sword is the revelation provided in Jesus words and deeds. The word of God is like a sword piercing, dividing of soul and spirit, (Heb 4:12) and if this is the case, then Mary too, just like everyone will be pierced as the word does its work reveling to the rising and the falling of many.

Growing, strong, filled with wisdom, favor of God

Our lesson closes with Jesus growing, filled with wisdom and favor with God. This is the same call on each of our lives to grow in your faith or favor with God. God is calling you to a life of faith, resting in Him. May you be like Simeon and like Anna, proclaiming and sharing the good news about Jesus, salvation has appeared, our redemption is now, may we who know Jesus as Lord and Savior live that message as the Holy Spirit works through us. May God indeed grant this to us all.

In His precious name we pray, AMEN. May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN.