

February 2, 2020

St. Luke 2:22-38:

“The Best News for a Bunch of Nothings”

- I. A Bunch of Nothings. But God's People.
- II. In the Presence of the Temple and the Light.
- III. In the Shadow of the Cross.

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Dear Friends in Christ,

“God chose what is foolish...what is weak...what is low and despised in the world...to bring to nothing things that are (seemingly wise, strong and elevated by the world), so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” (1 Cor. 1:27-30) And there you are! The truth most cannot endure; the wisdom of God. Though God’s people are seen *by most* as nothing of this world, without God’s love in Christ we would be and remain so forever, as *the most* will!

Do you see them? “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...” (Lk. 2:22) “They (Joseph and Mary) brought (Jesus) up to Jerusalem...” (Lk. 2:22a) And, “there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon.” (Lk. 2:25a) “And there was a prophetess, Anna...” (Lk. 2:36) God’s chosen: Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna. The low and despised by the world.

Do you see what’s in front of us?

THE BEST NEWS FOR A BUNCH OF NOTHINGS

I. A Bunch of Nothings, But God’s People.

Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna. Nothings to the world, but God’s beloved people. We know the love of God for Mary and Joseph. We’re told they were at the Temple “to present (Jesus) to the Lord...and to offer sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord...” (v22b-24a) They willingly submit to the Mosaic Law and give their firstborn as an offering to God, and, in so doing, demonstrate Christ’s submission to the Law, part of His State of Humiliation, to secure the forgiveness of our sin.

Regarding Simeon we’re told: “...this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before had seen the Lord’s Christ.” (vv. 25-26) Truly, a child of God blessed by God!

Regarding Anna we’re told she was “a prophetess... having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple... And coming up to that very hour (the hour of Mary and Joseph’s appearance with Jesus) she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” (vv. 36-38) God made Anna a powerful witness to the saving work of Jesus.

And that brings us to us; each person. This is where we were: “And you (each of us) were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” (Eph. 2:1,2a, 3b) In God’s eyes we were dead. Nothing. Nothing, until we are drawn to the great miracle:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus... (Eph. 2:4-6)

We might be nothings in the eyes of the world, but because of the faith He has given us to know and walk steadfast with Jesus we are His. But that’s not all.

II. In the Presence of the Temple and the Light.

Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna were in the Temple. This was known as Herod’s Temple which was built after the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. - that Temple was built by Solomon. Both Temples were based on the original Tabernacle in the Wilderness constructed in the

time of Moses. All three structures were pictures of Jesus; that is, foreshadowed Jesus. The worship life and sacrificial system foreshadowed Jesus. Recall what John the Baptist declared: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 2:29) The ultimate sacrifice pictured in the sacrificial lamb of the Tabernacle and Temples!

Recall the Apostle John's words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...." (Jn. 1:1,14) The "dwelt among us" can be translated "tabernacled among us." And then recall this incident:

So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. (Jn. 2:18-21)

Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna in the Temple beholding and holding the fulfillment of the Temple; namely, the Temple Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ! With this reality in front of them, Simeon declares of Jesus: "...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." (v. 32) They're in the Presence of the Temple in the flesh Who is the light for eternal life and glory to His people!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, these words of Scripture thunder: "...you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (I Cor 1:30) And with those words these words to a rejecting world: "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom (its human wisdom), it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." (I Cor. 1:21)

Listen. We stand with Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna and behold the Lamb of God in the very Word He has given us, the Scriptures. We are allowed to receive Him and hold Him in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We are part of the great band of "nothings" God made alive in Christ! Our sins have been forever forgiven, our guilt swept away. And that brings us to this . . .

III. In the Shadow of the Cross.

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 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 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (vv. 33-35)

I would hope you understand that the world neither loves nor likes Jesus, not if they understand Him. We remember those words of Paul:

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. (I Cor. 2:15,16)

We are the odor of Christ. To those investing everything in this world and content with rejecting God or designing a god to their liking, we are "a fragrance (odor) of death". The Gospel is the greatest offense to the self righteous. However, to those who see the horror of their sin and the inevitable physical and spiritual death as a result of sin, Christ is the payment for all sin and the way unto eternal life. To such we are "a fragrance from life to life." Eternal life! We are "the aroma of Christ", and as Simeon testified, "the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed." (v. 34b)

We declare with the Apostle Paul, "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the knowledge of him everywhere." (2 Cor. 2:14) "We pray, dear Lord, give us strength and courage!"

It is as Martin Luther said:

Whosoever has this Savior, the Savior of God, may have a peaceful, quiet heart. For though death be as terrible, the sin as mighty, the devil as evil and poisonous as he ever will, yet we have the Savior of God, that is, an almighty eternal Savior; He is strong enough to move us out of death into life, out of sin into righteousness." (P. E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament, CPH, St. Louis, Mo., p. 275)

We stand with Joseph, Mary, Simeon and Anna and declare, "My eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples." (vv. 30,31) We hear the words of Jesus: "I will come again and take you to Myself, that where I am You may be also." (Jn. 14:3) And this is *the best news for a bunch of nothings!*

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott