

December 29, 2024

Luke 2:22-40

“Lord, Let Us Also Go In Peace!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 North Oakland Ave.  
Decatur, Illinois 62526

*“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.” (Luke 2:26)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What if you knew when you were going to die, or that you are without question going to live? This occurred to me when I was reading our gospel lesson for this morning. Simeon experienced a rather interesting two sides to his life. On the one side, he experienced knowing for a fact that he was going to live and not die as each day went by. Since the Holy Spirit had revealed that he would not die, until he would see the Christ, he lived everyday figuring that today was not going to be the day of his death for as long as he had not yet seen the Savior. How do you think you would deal with that kind of knowledge?

I believe that the way we would react to something like that would really depend upon our personality and beliefs. How did Simeon react? It says in our lesson that Simeon “... was righteous and devout, *waiting for the consolation of Israel*, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” This means that he was a believer in the righteous Savior who was yet to come. And because he believed in the righteousness of the Savior, he was considered righteous before God and devout. In other words, he was committed, and waiting in great expectation for the comfort of Israel, as one who had prevailed to receive such a great blessing. And the Holy Spirit was upon him as both a believer and prophet who had been set apart to proclaim the great things of the Lord! And his words even come to us in our day!

So, what do you think? Is that how you would react knowing that each day you are not going to die? Like I said, it all depends on your personality and beliefs. I mean some people would throw caution to the wind, and figure that each day could be used and abused according to their whim. Sometimes knowledge of the hidden can cause people to take advantage in ways that you would have never considered. Who knows all the possibilities? But not Simeon. He is looking for his Savior and comforted in him and his coming. He is in the peace that passes all understanding.

Now consider the other side of Simeon's life. In a moment, he holds the baby in his arms. He has seen with his very own eyes. Now he lives in the certainty that his time is over and that he is going to die. If he even made it to his bed that night, I wonder if he thought to himself about the prospect of not waking up the next morning. What was Simeon's state of mind after seeing Jesus? Was he down and out thinking about his now impending last breath? We don't see that from what we can see in the text. His thoughts about his impending death were touched by what he said in the face of his Savior: “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.”

How would you react if you knew that there was nothing now holding back your death, and that the goal was accomplished? I read an article that stated that when people die: “Most fall into one of two categories. They either decide to put their whole energy and focus into doing everything they can to beat the illness, or they opt to reflect on their lives and spend as much time as possible with loved ones doing

things that bring them happiness.” I also read that there are other roads that people travel, such as making the most of their time to be the best that they can be, while others see that everything is pointless which triggers self-destructive behavior. But the words of Simeon reveal his focus when he moves to the side of knowing that life is for all practical purposes over. He talks about being at peace.

Notice, that whether he knew that he was going to live or that he was going to die, he was at peace. And that’s the key. In both instances he was waiting. And in both instances there was peace. All of this begs the question: what is this peace? To be at peace means that at one time there must have been some sort of hostility or war. And that certainly is the case. “The wages of sin is death ...” Paul writes. Because of our rebellion against the commandments of God we have earned for ourselves a wage. Our paycheck is that we have been disconnected from God and deserve the punishment of death and hell forever.

Not only does Paul write that “the wages of sin is death” ... but he adds that “... the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Jesus has suffered for our sins and has died our death on the cross. He has experienced the hell that we deserve so that we might have eternal life. And to have eternal life with God also means that we have been forgiven or pardoned for all our sins, which further means that we have peace with God. Our hostility toward God, which has disconnected us from him, and the war that we have waged against him as we live in rebellion and death, has been replaced with the peace of the forgiveness of sins. By faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, everything has been made peaceful, even though we still live in a very hostile and war pursuing world.

This is what the baby in Simeon’s arms came to do. And this is understood when he is presented to the Lord at the temple with the accompanying sacrifice of “a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.” Simeon had been waiting. Now his wait is over. He holds in his arms and sees the one he has been waiting for and knows the peace he brings. Now he may depart. This is the steady comfort that the gospel of Jesus brings. In the coming of the baby, who grew up and went to the cross for us all, we are able to face life in every circumstance. And those who believe in the peace he brings are called blessed ... even in the day of death - as the voice from heaven says in the book of Revelation: “... Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

After a long illness, a Christian woman was taken to the hospital for surgery. Noticing her distress as she was being prepared for the operation, a Christian attendant took her hand and whispered softly: “You have nothing to fear. Only one of two things could possibly happen to you - and both of them are good. If you should die, you will be with Jesus. If you should live, Jesus will be with you. In either case, both of you will be together.”

What a precious comfort! In health and in sickness, in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death, both of them - Jesus and she - would always be together. This is the Christian comfort that comes from peace. This is the comfort especially in the dark moments of illness. The night may be long and trying, the sleep irregular and marked by intense emotion, activity, or instability, the body faint, and the heart full of anxiety, but no matter what the trials of the night may be or whatever the day may bring, the Lord is with us always.

As our Lord Jesus says to each and everyone of us: “See, I am with you always, to the end of the age!” And again, “I will never leave you nor forsake you!” And to be with Christ - what greater comfort could there be?

And even after the night of life’s little day is over, the Lord is with us. As the psalmist so boldly writes (116:15), “Precious *in the sight* of the Lord is the death of his saints.” Beautiful words! If a person dies will he live again? Jesus says in the gospel of John (11:25): “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live ...” This is how the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard our hearts and minds - through Christ Jesus.

Like Simeon we are waiting. We are waiting in the same way that David was waiting in Psalm 27. There he writes: “I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD (Psalm 27:13-14)!” In other words, we can patiently wait and be strong for we live in peace, knowing that when it is all said and done, we will look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. By faith we even see him now in the gospel and sacraments.

Therefore, like Simeon, we need to hold the baby in our arms and look intently at him. There is nothing more important than the baby and all that he has done. Consider it! By faith, Simeon was holding the baby even before he held the baby and he was still holding the baby even after he handed him back to Mary. In that way we also say: **Lord, Let Us Also Go In Peace!**

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott