

Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 356, 02-02-2020 † Presentation of our Lord

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.
“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

LUKE 2

²⁹Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word, ³⁰because my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared before the face of all people, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.



Last week Sunday nine people died in a helicopter crash. It was unusual news, but the most unusual part was one of those counted among the dead. The death of a retired professional basketball player, at 41 years of age, shocked the world. Kobe Bryant. His name is everywhere, especially for L.A. Lakers fans as people who felt so connected to Kobe. You could feel the weight of this tragedy by turning on any radio or TV or reading any news this past week, especially because he left behind a wife and 3 children, with yet another daughter who died in that helicopter with him. How sad! The stories of his character and church attendance seem to amplify the tragedy. When a major figure dies, it's worth taking time to pause and appraise. Especially because it is true that we spend an awful lot of our lives denying the reality of what's coming for us.

Today marks 40 days after the birth of Jesus, the day of presentation, when Joseph and Mary present our Lord Jesus in the temple. They made sacrifice for their firstborn, a son. Though the baby would humanly never remember this experience, His Spirit was there to breathe beautiful words from the mouth of an old man.

When We Are Prepared To Depart This World In Peace

This man certainly did not fear death. Old man Simeon did not regard death as something awful and appalling, but rather something desirable. He does not even call it “dying,” but he calls it “departing” or “dismissing,” and his words show that he longed for death.

Now, he says, “*Lord, let your servant depart.*” He was glad the time had come for him to depart out of this world. What made Simeon so willing and ready to die? Was it because he had gratuitously enjoyed the world and became over-satiated? Was it because he gained worldly wealth and renown? No. For he does not say, “*Lord now let your servant depart in peace*, for I’ve enjoyed my pleasures, I’ve gotten rich and famous, and I’ve had my fill.”

Pleasure, wealth, honor, fame, are the things men and women pursue, as though they were the highest good that alone can bring happiness. But tasting the world will not make men and women cheerful and willing to die. The simple reason is that you cannot take these things with you into death. To set your heart on pleasures, making money, winning fame, or whatever is of this world and must remain in this world, is **NOT** preparing to die in peace. The more complex reason is how depressing those goals are. To set your heart on these is instead preparing to depart with **remorse**. So this is a lesson for those who store up treasures in this world, so you can learn to be one of those who store up treasures in the world to come.

What made Simeon so ready to die? Was it because he practiced virtues and did what is right? He was certainly a pious man who walked in the fear of the Lord, because the text says, “*Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout*” (25). But he doesn’t hope in his own goodness. For he doesn’t say, “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for I have lived holy, and my works speak for themselves and justify me.”

Our own works cannot make us cheerful in death. The simple reason is that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Born flesh of the flesh our whole life long from beginning to end is all soiled with sin; our best works, our highest virtues, when examined in the light of God’s countenance, are all unclean.

In healthy days when death does not yet stare them in the face, people may close their eyes against that fact, persuading themselves that their doings can justify them. But when death comes they find out soon enough that they have been leaning on a broken staff, and terror falls on them when conscience rises up, saying, “You must now go appear before a holy God, and He will require perfection.”

What made Simeon so willing and ready to die? Joseph and Mary brought the child Jesus to the temple. There Simeon met them, and he took the Child into his arms, and he said, "*Lord, you now let your servant depart in peace, according to your Word; because my eyes have seen your salvation*" (29-30). Simeon was ready to depart because he saw this Child.

But he saw this Child in two different ways. He saw Him bodily with his own bodily eyes. The Holy Spirit had promised to Simeon that he should so see Him before his death (25). Yet seeing Jesus bodily could in itself not have made Simeon cheerful in death. Judas Iscariot saw Jesus bodily, and what a terrible death he died! Simeon also saw Jesus with the eye of faith. He saw in Him the salvation prepared by God, and he rejoiced to depart to enjoy this salvation.

It is this that will make you so tranquil in death: **You see salvation in Christ Jesus**. When we see our salvation in Christ Jesus, **then** ... then **alone** ... but then **surely** we can depart in peace.

Why is that? It is because this Jesus has removed every possible barrier that could possibly partition us from God:

- Sin separated us from God; but here is "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).
- Satan claimed us; but here is the woman's Seed to crush the serpent's head.
- The Law pronounced its curse on us because we have not kept it; but here is the Son of God, "*born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the full rights of sons*" (Gal. 4:4-5).
- Hell and everlasting death tried to claim us, because *the wages of sin is death* (Rom. 6:23); but here is the Mighty One of Israel, who said, "*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death*" (Hosea 13:14).

Simeon says, "*My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared*" (30-31). This is **NOT** a salvation prepared by man or woman. Here is **God's** salvation, which **God** has prepared. And this must be a salvation indeed, a salvation that saves ... saves to the uttermost ... saves from all evil.

Whoever makes this salvation his trust and his plea **cannot** be lost. He **must** have everlasting life, because God cannot deny His own work. Here is the light that casts its rays into the grave, yes beyond the grave into endless eternity, to enlighten the way to heaven. For here is He who said, "*I am the resurrection and*

the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this" (John 11:25-26)? To this salvation, let us each hold fast.

This past week my wife and I also viewed the sermon of a bereaved WELS pastor, whose wife recently died of cancer. It was bittersweet to see this pastor witness ... to his own church ... in his own wife's funeral ... his faith in God's promises. He repeatedly made the point how hard it is to be prepared for such a trial.

Over the coffin of this world, look into this salvation and calmly step into the next stage of your life, even if it whispers death.

I'm asking you to remember this salvation.

Look to it. Ponder it and concentrate on it. Get your arms around it.

Hold fast to it and hold onto it for dear life, and you will find:

- ✓ rest for your souls
- ✓ rest in life
- ✓ rest in death
- ✓ rest in time
- ✓ rest in eternity.

For Jesus, who purchased this salvation, declares it. He said, "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may also be*" (John 14:3); in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.