

HOW SHALL THE SAINTS DEPART IN PEACE?

(Luke 2:21-35)

I. PRELIMINARIES

- A. Welcome
- B. Pastoral Prayer
- C. Dismiss the Kids
- D. Today's Text:

²¹ Now when *the* eight days required for his circumcision were completed, the child was named Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²² And when the appointed time for their purification according to the Law of Moses was completed, Joseph and Mary brought him up to Jerusalem to present *him* to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every *first-born* male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in accordance with what was set out in the Law of the Lord: “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”⁷ / ²⁵ Now in Jerusalem there was a man whose name was Simeon; and this man was *both* righteous and devout, looking for the Consolation of Israel,⁸ and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ Now it the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And so, *moved* by the Spirit, Simeon entered the temple precincts. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to perform for him what was customary according to the Law, ²⁸ Simeon took him *up* in his arms and blessed God, saying, ²⁹ “Master, just as you promised, you are now releasing your servant to depart in peace, ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all peoples: ³² a light of revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” // ³³ Now the child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon had spoken about Jesus. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them. And he said to Mary, his mother, “Behold, this *child* is set in place for *the* fall and rise of many in Israel, and to serve as a sign that will be spoken against—³⁵ indeed, a sword will pierce your own soul as well—so that the inmost thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

- E. Prayer for the ministry of the Word

II. INTRODUCTION

A. All of us have a heart full of questions, *but the most urgent of all is the question of death*

B. All of us, at one time or another, have experienced the fear of death; and some of us are crippled by it (e.g., Dr. Lickerman; victims of SR fire)

¹⁴ Inasmuch, then, as the children *all* share in flesh and blood, he himself partook of flesh and blood, just as they did, so that through death he might destroy the one who held the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and release those who through the fear of death were subject to bondage their entire lives. – Heb. 2

C. God understands this—and cares:

The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, this side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: ¹⁶ The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and on those who sat in the region and shadow of death a light has dawned.” -- Isaiah 9

. . . the tender mercy of our God, by which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death . . . Zacharias, Luke 1

D. So he gave us a man who WASN'T afraid:

“Master, just as you promised, you are now releasing your servant to depart in peace . . .

D. Today's Big Idea: God sets forth this good man as a role model: *If we desire to depart this life in peace, we should take some lessons from Simeon!*

III. THE SETTING: TEMPLE WORSHIP

A. Text:

Now when *the* eight days required for his circumcision were completed, the child was named Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²² And when the appointed time for their purification according to the Law of Moses was completed, Joseph and Mary brought him up to Jerusalem to present *him* to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every *first-born* male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in accordance with what was set out in the Law of the Lord: “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

B. MP: Circumcision, purification, presentation: Christ, our obedient Representative, fulfilling all righteousness for us.

C. MP: Joseph and Mary, Simeon, and Anna too—*all are people of the temple of God, worshiping according to the ordinances of God*

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh (*lit. fat, full of sap*) and green, ¹⁵ proclaiming, “The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.” – Psalm 92

IV. QUALITIES OF THE MAN WHO DEPARTS IN PEACE

A. **He is righteous and devout:**

²⁵ Now in Jerusalem there was a man whose name was Simeon; and this man was *both* righteous and devout

- Righteous (biblically, there are two kinds of righteousness)
- Devout
- The Relation of the Two: Robed in Christ's righteousness by faith, and devout by new birth, we are to be filled with righteousness by our devotion plus the work of his Holy Spirit
- To face death confidently, we need to be both

B. He is looking for the Consolation of Israel

. . . looking for the Consolation of Israel . . .

- The hope of the elect Jews amidst captivity and widespread apostasy
- The ROOT of Simeon's righteousness: Hope in Christ
- *Paraklesis*: Comfort in sorrow, Help and Strength to go on
- The Spirit is the Second Comforter, Christ is the First!
- Note: He understands that the thrust of the Gospel—and all of Scripture—is to comfort (encourage, strengthen) the saints

⁴For whatever was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵Now may the God of perseverance and comfort grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶so that in unison—with one voice—you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Therefore, receive one another, just as Christ also received you to the glory of God.

C. He is a man of the Spirit (and therefore weak, so that he may be strong)

. . . and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶Now it the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And so, *moved* by the Spirit, Simeon entered the temple precincts.

- The Spirit is upon him: Would that all God's people would prophesy!
- The Spirit reveals things to him
- He walks (responsively, obediently) in the Spirit

D. He clings tightly to Christ

And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to perform for him what was customary according to the Law, Simeon took him *up* in his arms . . .

- MP: The great goal of all such clinging: to GROW in our knowledge of the Person and Work of our Lord! To SEE the Salvation of Israel more fully, and so to be filled with light! (More in a moment)
- Cf. Jacob
- Not bitter, but blessed!

E. He is a glad and grateful servant of God

... and he blessed God, saying, ²⁹“Master, just as you promised, you are now releasing your servant to depart in peace . . .

- A Loving Despot!
- A happy servant
- Released from his duties at day’s end (Greek, *apoluo*)
- Why is Simeon at peace? Because . . .

F. He has seen God’s salvation

... for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all peoples: ³² a light of revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

- Above all else, Christ is Savior, and simply to SEE him, in repentance and faith, is Salvation (justification)

⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I myself will raise him up on the last day.”

- Newton’s BIG IDEA: Just as we are saved by seeing Christ, *so too are we sanctified*. His favorite Bible texts:

¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding⁶ as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; *and* this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. – 2 Cor. 3

As for what we will be, that has not yet been revealed; but we do know that when he appears we will be like him, for we will see him just as he is. – 1 John 3

- Some biblical ways of seeing/ beholding Christ:

1. The stages of his eternal life (eternal pre-existence, covenant of redemption, OT appearances, earthly life, death, resurrection, ascension, session, heavenly reign, parousia, consummation by resurrection, judgment, re-creation of the cosmos.

2. His three great offices (Prophet, Priest, King)

3. His seven I AM’s: Bread of Life, Light of the World, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Vine

4. His many roles (Savior, Lord, Husband, Friend, Brother, Head, Root, Food, Drink, Strength, Hope, Foundation, Shield, Example, Forerunner, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption: “In Christ alone is our all!”)

5. Life, Teaching, Miracles (note: the primacy of the Gospels)

6. His many OT appearances (Christophanies, Types, Prophecies)

- What Simeon saw: God’s salvation: a light of revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”
- MP: Let us come to Holy Scripture with this one thing in view: To catch a fuller glimpse of Christ! **As we see more and more of him, we will see him turning death, not into a dread, but into a door—a door into his very presence, where we will see him as He is!**

G. He is a dispenser of blessing to the people of God

³³ Now the child’s father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon had spoken about Jesus. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them.

H. He understands the reality of spiritual warfare, and the cost of discipleship— and he is not afraid to talk about them

And he said to Mary, his mother, “Behold, this *child* is set in place (destined) for *the* fall and rise of many in Israel, and to serve as a sign that will be spoken against—³⁵ indeed, a sword will pierce your own soul as well—so that the inmost thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

- We must proclaim Christ: the Rock of our Salvation, but a Stone of Stumbling to the disobedient (Mt. 7, 1 Peter 2)

⁴ Coming to him—a living stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious in the sight of God— ⁵ you yourselves, as living stones, are also being built *into* a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, so as to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For this reason we read in Scripture: “Behold, in Zion I lay a stone, a chosen and precious cornerstone; and he who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ⁷ So then, for you who believe, this stone is precious; but for those who disbelieve, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,”⁷ ⁸ and “a stone that causes stumbling, and a rock that brings offense.” They stumble because they are disobedient to the word, to which also they were appointed.

- We are to expect conflict, warfare . . . designed to make us strong, discerning, and steadfast

- We must speak all we are given to say—the Whole Counsel of God—openly, honest, and in a timely manner . . . which is always for the good of the hearer (e.g., Mary at the foot of the cross)

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: HOW SHALL THE SAINTS DEPART IN PEACE?

- Simeon has given us LOTS to think about, but in the end, it boils down to this:
- As a servant to his master, fix your eyes on Christ: Cling to him, grow in him, obey him
- If you do, you will live in peace today, and depart in peace on the day you die!

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth, there is stored up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me² on that Day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.