

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas  
1 January 2012  
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita  
Luke 2:22-40

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

Jesus is already 40 days old, today.

Today, the infant Jesus is brought to the temple in the usual way, all according to the Torah—the instruction God gave to Moses.

Everything about today's Gospel reading was "meet, right, and salutary" according to this Law.

Mary and Joseph allowed the proper time for purification.

They went to the right place, the Temple in Jerusalem.

They presented this Jesus, their firstborn male, to the Lord.

And they offered the appropriate sacrifice according to their family income:

a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.

All was done "**according to the Law of Moses**" (2:22),

**"just as it is written in the Law of the Lord"** (2:23).

And what would've made for normal practice and the common ceremonies of having a child, were quickly all thrown through a loop by two temple visitors.

The first is Simeon.

**"And behold a man was in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.**

**He was a just and blessed man, waiting for the consolation of Israel.**

**And the Holy Spirit was upon Him"** (2:25).

Simeon is another character like John the Baptist and his parents Zechariah and Elizabeth.

He's an old testament sort of figure,

and even sounds like a prophet!

This Simeon was told by the Lord that he wouldn't die without seeing the Lord's Christ, the Messiah, the savior of Israel!

Little did Mary and Joseph know, but this all-too-common presentation at the Temple was in fact the fulfillment of prophecy!

Here Jesus comes to Simeon, just as He had promised before.

And as Mary and Joseph were about to present this Jesus before the Lord in the usual fashion,

Simeon, came barging into the temple, took the child in his arms,

and Simeon himself presented the Christ child, blessing God and saying,

**"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,**

**according to Thy word,**

**For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,**

**which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people,**

**a light to lighten the Gentiles,**

**and the glory of Thy people Israel"** (2:29-32).

This *Song of Simeon* as we sometimes call it,  
or the *Nunc Dimittis*, is old-man-Simeon's confession and preaching of the Gospel.

The Lord's promise is true,  
the consolation of Israel has come,  
the sin of the world now has its greatest enemy—  
this infant, 40-day-old child, is the salvation of God!

Simeon calls this Jesus the "light."  
But not just any light, the light which also reveals God's love and desire for the Gentiles,  
that is, for *all people*!

And for Israel, this Jesus is their glory.  
He is the presence of God with man on earth.  
In this Jesus, *salvation unto us has come!*

But after this song, Simeon turns to Mary and Joseph—  
"who were marveling at what was said of their Jesus" (2:33)—  
and he blesses them.

But then he speaks a strange word to Mary, a very bitter-sweet message:  
"Behold, He is destined by God for the falling and rising of many in Israel  
and as a sign being spoken against  
(even your own soul will be run through with a sword)—  
so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (2:34-35).

Simeon, remember, is a prophet.  
His words here are words that only come to make sense as we continue following this story of Jesus.

In this story, we'll find that Jesus is the great stumbling block,  
that He is rejected, spoken against, beaten, cursed, and on the last day—crucified.  
And it's here, on the cross, that Mary's soul is truly pierced by the sword—  
for here she watches her own dear Son run through with a sword (Jn 19:25).

Simeon proclaims the salvation won by this Christ—  
a salvation that is costly, painful, and truly bitter-sweet.

And with Luke one is never enough, two's always better!  
Luke gives us both Angels and Shepherds,  
John the Baptizer and Jesus,  
Elizabeth and Mary,  
Zechariah and Joseph,  
and now, Simeon and Anna.

Anna is called a "prophetess" (Lk 2:36).  
She, too, is an old testament sort of figure:  
"Daughter of Phanuel, from the tribe of Asher" (2:36).

She was head of the altar guild, an older lady who served night and day:  
 worshiping, fasting, praying.

And she was around enough to know that what Simeon just did wasn't part of the normal rite!  
 Her ears perked up, her wrinkled, worn face smiled with joy,  
 and **“she began to give thanks to God and spoke concerning this Jesus to all  
 who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem”** (2:38).

Anna also saw in this baby the savior.

He was the one to redeem Israel.  
 He was the one to save.

Then Luke reminds us,  
**“All of this was done according to the Law, the Torah, of the Lord”** (2:39).

Jesus, even at a month old, is the fulfillment of the Law.  
 He is Himself the salvation and redemption and presence of God with us.

And just as Simeon and Anna proclaim the truth of this Jesus,  
 so do we today!

Just as Simeon's eyes saw the salvation of Israel,  
 so have ours.  
 Just as Anna awaited the redemption of Jerusalem,  
 so do we.

For this Jesus is God for us.  
 He's for Simeon;  
 He's for Anna;  
 He's for Mary and Joseph;  
 He's *for you*.

While Mary and Joseph, lifted Him up, presenting Him before the Lord as a child,  
 so also did we lift Him up onto the cross, presenting Him as the sacrifice for us.

When God is for us in Christ,  
 your sins can't hurt you anymore.

He is your salvation, your redemption, your life.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*