

The Festival of the Presentation of our Lord and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary
St. Luke 2:22-32
February 2nd, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Every Male Shall Be Called Holy

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought Him up to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’), and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, ‘A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

When somebody dies many people want to say “Rest in peace.” Even when it is quite obvious by all outward confessions that this person is *not* resting in peace. It is good that we desire, like our Lord, that all men be saved. Contrary to our world’s false notion that everyone goes to Heaven, not everyone who dies rests in peace; everyone goes to Heaven. Only those go to Heaven who are like St. Simeon in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. Only those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus can depart and rest in peace. For only He is the Light to the Gentiles, and the Glory of His people Israel. Apart from faith in the Christ no man can rest in peace. Apart from clinging in faith to the Lord + Jesus as the only Savior of the world can one hope to depart in peace.

For it is only the Lord’s Christ—His Anointed One—Who can truly be called holy. Moses, the Prophet, wrote in the Law that “Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.” The firstborn male, he who opened the womb, was called holy. He was set apart to be the Lord’s. In order to redeem the child back from the Lord, a sacrifice was to be made. The parents of our Lord, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary, followed the Law of Moses and forty days after days of their purification were completed, they brought the Boy + Jesus to the temple to do according to the custom of the Law: to present Him to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice. A sacrifice that shows their humbleness and poverty, a sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

In this the Lord + Jesus, the Baby Boy + Jesus, is no different from any other Israelite firstborn baby boy who is forty days old, and whose parents were obedient to the Law. Faithful parents redeemed their firstborn sons back from the Lord through a sacrifice. What sets the Baby Boy + Jesus apart is the proclamation of St. Simeon. His faith in this Baby Boy is what sets the Lord + Jesus apart. For St. Simeon, who was looking for the consolation of the people of Israel, found it in this Baby Who is forty days old. This Child would be the cause of the fall and rising of many in Israel. It is account of Him that salvation will come to all those who cling to Him in faith. They will depart in peace. They will rest in

peace, for they looked for and found the consolation of the whole world in the Lord + Jesus. They will be raised from the dead on the Last Day.

However, it is because of the rejection of Him as the only Savior that many in Israel, and in the whole world, will be cast into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. He will be the cause of their falling because they refused to trust in Him for salvation; seeking out every other sort of false god for them to cling to. These do not rest in peace. They do not depart in peace, but are condemned to the lake of fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. We may wish them to rest in peace all we want, but because they have rejected the Lord + Jesus as the Savior of mankind, and as their Savior, they do not rest in peace.

For only the Lord + Jesus is the consolation of Israel. Only He is the true consolation of all the world. For only He is the One Who is truly holy to the Lord. His parents redeemed Him back from the Lord with the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, but it is this Baby Boy Who is forty days old Who will grow up and redeem the whole world by being the one true sacrifice for the whole world. He would grow up to redeem—to buy back—from sin, death, and the power of the devil, the whole world, so that all those who cling to Him in faith, may have the same hope that St. Simeon does. That now that their eyes had seen the Lord + Jesus—had seen the Lord's Christ—they could depart in peace.

For one can only truly depart in peace whose sins are forgiven. To receive forgiveness, a person needs to have two things: he must confess his sin, and receive absolution, that is, forgiveness of sins, from the pastor, not doubting but firmly believing that by the absolution of the pastor, his sins are truly forgiven. Sinners, must first recognize and acknowledge their sins. They have to confess that they are indeed poor, miserable sinners who are in need of God's grace. They have to be willing to amend their sinful lives, not cling selfishly to their sins, thinking foolishly that forgiveness comes to those who willingly continue to commit sin. These penitent sinners will seek to possess the second half of forgiveness, the absolution; the declaration from the pastor, as if from God Himself, that their sins are forgiven. To this absolution they cling to in faith.

Faith clings to the promises of salvation found in the Lord + Jesus alone. St. Simeon clung in faith to the promise of the coming of the Lord's Christ. He had been given the preaching that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. The Holy Ghost was his preacher. He preached to St. Simeon that he would bear witness to the consolation of Israel. In faith St. Simeon clung to the preaching of the Holy Ghost; He believed it unflinchingly that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ.

This same preaching is preached by the Holy Ghost to us through the mouth of the pastor. He declares to us that the consolation of the world is found in the Lord's Christ—in the Anointed One of the Lord God; the Lord + Jesus alone. He has redeemed us lost and condemned person from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Through faith in Him and His sacrifice for us, we have been redeemed by His shed blood on the tree of the holy cross. Through faith we are set apart—declared holy—by the Lord God heavenly Father. We bear the righteousness of the Christ; we bear His holiness through faith; the faith that is gifted to us through the Word and the Sacraments; through the preaching of the pure Gospel and Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in which we are buried with Christ in His death, and receive the forgiveness of sins through the meal of His Body and Blood given in bread and wine.

St. Simeon sang the *Nunc Dimittis* when he saw the Baby Boy + Jesus in the temple. Here was the true sacrifice of the whole world Who would redeem mankind from all their sins. Having seen the Savior with his very own eyes, he could do no other thing but to sing that he could now depart in peace. He could now rest in peace in the knowledge that his sins were forgiven through the works of this forty-day old Christ. It is for this same reason that we also close every Divine Service with the song of St.

Simeon—with the words of the *Nunc Dimittis*. For having rejoiced in our Holy Baptism by recalling the Name of the Triune Lord God placed upon us at our Holy Baptism, and making the sign of the cross as a token that we bear this holy Name, and having knelt at this altar and received the reward of our Lord's suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross; His Body and Blood given and shed for us for the remission of sins. And also, having heard the preaching of the promises that in the Christ of the Lord alone we have redemption and forgiveness, we can also depart in peace. We can also rest in peace.

For our eyes have also seen the salvation of the Lord God. The salvation He prepared before the face of all people. We have seen the Light of the Gentiles, and the Glory of the people Israel in our one and only Savior, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Apart from Him there can be no rest; no peace. Without faith in Him, there is no rest for the wicked. As much as we want to say of those who have died, "Rest in peace" there can be no peace for those who do not cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. For no peace can exist for those who remain in their sins.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us confess our sins and believe that on account of the Christ we have forgiveness. For in Him we have peace and consolation. In Him we can truly depart in peace from not only this Divine Service, but we can also truly depart in peace from this life. For our sins have been forgiven by Him. He has become the true sacrifice for our sins on the tree of the holy cross. Let us cling in faith to Him, and gladly depart in peace knowing that through Him our sins have been forgiven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!