

The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Our Lord 2020

Luke 2.22-32

St. John Lutheran Church, Palmer, KS

In the Name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we see our Lord presented in the temple just shortly after his birth. All the firstborn males of Israel were sacred to the Lord, because each one was to remind the people that God's only-begotten Son would someday be born of a virgin to save them from their sins. Now, when the infant Jesus comes first comes to the temple in Jerusalem, he fulfills Malachi 3:1: "And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple."

Moms, can you imagine taking such a trip after giving birth? Only 40 days into motherhood and having to travel, by foot and beast, to the temple far away? Doable? Yes. Enjoyable? Probably not.

But Mary and Joseph are godly and pious. They throw it all on God's Word and go to the temple, not knowing what will happen. That's the story of parenting, really. You go at it with God's Word not knowing how it will turn out. I love that Prov. 22:6 is engraved outside of Linn Lutheran: "Train up a child in the way he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart from it." That's the general truth, and by it the Lord encourages us that parenting still matters even in a world where our children are exposed to all manner of things I need not mention here. But like all proverbs, this has its exceptions. Some bad parents will turn out a godly kid, and some God-fearing parents will turn out a bad egg to no fault of their own. That's the scary thing about parenting, isn't it? The results are not in your hands.

Mary and Joseph know that their child is special, holy to the Lord. But they don't know everything yet. They don't know how it will all turn out or what it will mean for them. They don't know the cross and the resurrection yet. Mary doesn't know that she will be widowed and have to bury her son. So what can they do but go to the Lord's house, say their prayers, and cast all their cares on the Lord's Word? So they set out on their journey and loaded up the baby supplies and the sacrifices alike.

You can read in Leviticus about the sacrifices required. For now it's enough to know that all those sacrifices in the OT served to remind the people of two things: 1) that not even infants come into this world without sin. We are all sinful from our conception. The genetic and spiritual wiring has all gone wrong in Adam and every new baby is subject to death and inherited sin.. 2) There were to know that a sinless Lamb was coming to redeem them. In him they could find forgiveness of sins, a new birth with new "spiritual genetics," so to speak, and everlasting life.

These sacrifices must have been heartbreaking at times, even for farmers and hunter who well know how to butcher. But that's the point. Sin breaks God's heart. Sin is ugly. Uglier than we realize. Jesus is our sacrifice and lamb. His cross is bloody and ugly, yet made beautiful by his love and forgiveness. He is our righteousness. His death on the cross is the whole burnt offering for all sins. No sin goes uncovered by Jesus' blood. He paid for it all.

This is why old Simeon rejoices so upon receiving the Lord's Christ. To most eyes that day was routine. Mom and dad were bringing their baby to the temple to do what the law of Moses required. But Simeon sees more. He sees through the lens of God's Word: *Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 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.*

Consider what this meant for Simeon: most of us would not really want to know when we were going to die. Knowing our death day would ruin things.

{Superbowl}

Simeon could have been afraid to see the Lord's Christ. Every night he was able to go to bed thinking, "Well, I didn't see the Christ today, so I know I'll wake up in the morning." But when he saw Christ, he could have been afraid of death. Time was up. If you were given a marker of your death, how would you react? But what happens? When he sees Jesus he takes him in his arms and says "No no no. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Far from being afraid, when Simeon had Jesus, he had peace.

Dear saints, that goes for you too. When you, like Simeon, receive the Lord's Christ, you die to sin. You are buried with Christ through Baptism. But you are

alive to God. You are joined to his resurrection. Whoever believes in Jesus does not die eternally. You also have this Christ who says to you: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

What Simeon saw, and may we too, is that Jesus is the consolation of Israel. In Him there is no reason to fear your death day or any other day. And if you listen carefully, you hear Simeon singing not just that Jesus is Savior, but, he says, that Jesus is salvation itself. This means that if you have Jesus you have salvation. Not merely the potential to be saved, but when you have Jesus you have salvation itself.

And if you have Jesus you have the consolation of Israel. And if you have Jesus you have light. And if you have Jesus, you have the glory of his people Israel. John says that in Christ we have seen the Lord’s glory, full of grace and truth. In Moses’ day the glory cloud kept the people of Israel out of the tabernacle. Not even Moses could enter. But now God hides His glory in a baby held in a dying man’s arms. That glory now draws near to us through flesh and blood which we may hold. {That’s why our fathers built churches this way...}

Simeon received this Christ in his arms and rejoiced in such peace. At the Lord’s Supper you receive this same Jesus in your mouth and you may rejoice in this same peace. And having received such undeserved forgiveness for ourselves, we will gladly forgive one another.

George Herbert: “Love is that liquor sweet and most divine, Which my God feels as blood; but I, as wine.”

Come soon, Lord Jesus.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.