

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Sunday After Christmas, December 27, 2015

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 139, 138:1, 137, 138:2-6, 644
Lessons: Genesis 17:1-7, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 1:68-75.
Sermon Text: Luke 2:22-32.
Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In this sad world with all its problems, troubles and sorrows because of sin, there are two things which especially comfort and refresh us. They are, first, to hear the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ, telling us what He did for our salvation; and, secondly, to hear how someone receives the Savior in true faith and can die with full confidence of having eternal life.

These are very precious blessings from God, and we want to learn more about them as we consider

THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

- 1. He was subject to the Law of God for our sakes;**
- 2. Simeon saw Him and praised God before departing this life.**

Jesus was presented to the Lord in the temple at a certain set time. *"When the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord."* It was 40 days after Jesus' birth, when He was about 6 weeks old. The time is mentioned because of the requirements of Moses' law. Already before this, when Jesus was 8 days old, He was circumcised at Bethlehem. Before our text we are told: *"When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb."* v. 21. And now when Jesus was 6 weeks old, two other requirements of the law of Moses had to be fulfilled. The first was the purification ceremony for Mary. According to the Levitical law of Moses taught in Leviticus chapter 12, Mary was considered unclean for 40 days after childbirth. And at the end of that time she had to bring an offering to the Lord in the temple, *"a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."* The second requirement of the law of Moses had to do with the presentation of Jesus as a firstborn son. The law required: *"Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord."* This is taught in the Book of Exodus. (chapter 13) After the deliverance of Israel from Egypt when all the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed by the Lord, the Lord commanded that all of Israel's firstborn sons should be consecrated to the Lord's service. Later, the tribe of Levi was chosen to render this service to the Lord in the house of worship, and the other firstborn sons were redeemed from this service by the payment of 5 shekels.

Now, the question arises: Why should Jesus and Mary be subject to these Levitical laws? All people besides Jesus are conceived and born in sin, as David says in Ps. 51: *"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."* v. 5. But, Mary did not conceive Jesus in sin. She herself was conceived and born in sin, but her sinful nature did not taint the Lord Jesus. The angel had told Mary: *"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."* Luke 1:35. Therefore, Mary was not in need of purification at the birth of the holy Jesus. Yet, she fulfilled the requirements of this law of purification at the time set by the law. Furthermore, Jesus certainly did not need to be presented to the Lord to serve Him. Already in the Psalms the Messiah says: *"Lo, I come... I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy Law is within My heart."* Ps. 40:7.8. His will was at all times in perfect agreement with the will of His heavenly Father. Jesus

says: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."* John 5:19. Yet, in this matter also Jesus permitted Himself to be made subject to the law. Mary and Joseph journeyed from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to present Jesus to the Lord in the temple and give an offering.

What was the reason for Jesus being made subject to the law? It all had to do with what Jesus came to do for our sakes to redeem us. St. Paul teaches this in these words: *"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* Gal. 4:4.5. Jesus permitted Himself to be made subject to the Law at this time for the same reason that He asked John the Baptist to baptize Him. Jesus said: *"...it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."* Matt. 3:15. Jesus came to this earth to redeem us and all sinful mankind. In order to accomplish this He Himself had to be under the law and be subject to its strict demands.

Our comfort and joy is that we are assured in the Bible that Jesus did keep every demand of the whole law for our sake. And by doing this without sin, in absolute perfection, He redeemed us from all our sins against God's law, and also from all guilt and punishment which we deserved. *"So by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous."* Rom. 5:19. In order to more fully appreciate what Jesus did for us, let us take our Catechism and see what God demands of us and what He forbids us to do, and then realize how many thousands of times we have failed to meet His holy demands and transgressed His commands. What great and precious comfort, then, to know that Jesus kept all the commandments of the law for us, for this we cannot do, and we would be lost forever in hell if He had not done this for us.

2.

There is also something else that took place in the temple when Jesus was brought there as a child. Simeon saw Him and praised God before departing this life. Our text describes Simeon: *"the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel."* Simeon was a believer who as a result of his faith lived as a believer in Christ should live. The same Lord who says in the Bible: *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,"* Rom. 3:23, says of Simeon that he was *"just and devout."* He was not like most of the people of his day who were self-righteous and who went through the outward rituals of religion, but did not believe in the coming Messiah.

Simeon was *"waiting for the consolation of Israel."* Simeon had often heard the Scripture promises of the Messiah's coming, and he in faith waited for this Messiah who would be the consolation or comfort of Israel. The Old Testament Scriptures often foretold of that time when the Christ would come to comfort the believers. Isaiah wrote: *"For the Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."* 51:3 God promised: *"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."* Is. 66:13. For this precious comfort or consolation which is found alone in the Christ, Simeon was waiting. Simeon believed the Scriptures. He accepted God's promises of salvation in the coming Messiah. So he waited, eagerly, confidently. He was an old man. He knew he didn't have long to live, but he believed with all his heart that he would yet see his Savior before he died.

This was not a mistaken idea of Simeon based on sentiment. Our text says: *"The Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."* The Holy Ghost had worked this faith in Simeon's heart, as He must in the case of every believer in Christ. *"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."* I Cor. 12:3. What a precious blessing to wait for! What a comfort this was to Simeon in his old age.

The Holy Spirit also led Simeon to come to the temple at just this time when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus in. So when Jesus was presented to the Lord, Simeon saw Him, took Him up in his arms and praised God before departing this life. The song of praise which Simeon sang we have in our hymnal. It is called in Latin the Nunc Dimittis (now depart) because Simeon said he could now depart this life. He said: *"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."* Simeon saw a poor looking couple with plain clothes in the temple with a little baby. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that this was the Christ child he had been waiting for. That must have been a very emotional

moment when Simeon took the Lord Jesus, his promised Savior, in his arms! With a voice trembling with emotion and joy he said in praise to God: Now I can depart this life in peace. Now I can die with perfect peace of heart and mind. Now death can come whenever God decides, and I will not be afraid to stand before the Judge of all mankind on the Last Day.

Simeon could face death with such perfect confidence and peace because, as he said: ***"Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."*** All the ancient promises of the coming Savior were now fulfilled. Simeon could behold this Savior with his own eyes. God had kept His Word! The One who would atone for all our sins, He had come. He is the One the angel said should be called ***"Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."*** Matt. 1:21. In Him alone is salvation, and in none other. The Bible says: ***"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*** Acts 4:12. And this salvation is for all mankind: ***"Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people."*** Both Jews and Gentiles are included in God's plan of universal salvation. Jesus came as ***"a light to lighten the Gentiles,"*** who sat in the heathen darkness of sin. And Jesus was ***"the glory of (God's) people Israel,"*** for He was born as a Jew according to His human nature, and He was promised first to the Jews as their Messiah.

Whether we are old like Simeon was, or whether we are young and may hope to have many more years on earth, there is one thing we want to be able to say before we die: ***"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation...."*** We may have that peace, as Simeon did, in our hearts, for the Bible says: ***"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** Rom. 5:1. When we trust in Jesus for salvation and believe the Gospel which tells us that in Christ Jesus God has reconciled sinners to Himself, not counting their sins against them, then we have peace. St. Paul says: ***"to be spiritually minded is life and peace,"*** for ***"there is ... no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*** Rom. 8:6.1.

Let us learn to say with the poet:

"Not what I feel or do Can give me peace with God;

Not all my prayers and sighs and tears Can bear my awe-full load.

Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin;

Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, Can give me peace within." Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 389:2-3)

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Edited by Robert Mehlretter)