



FROM THE PASTOR

The Nunc Dimittis

Luke 2:29-32

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation

³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel."

Last week, instead of looking at a Psalm, we looked at a psalm-like writing. It was the Song of Mary, the Lord's mother, praising God that she was to bear the baby Jesus. Today, we are going to look at another psalm-like New Testament passage. Historically this is known as the "Nunc Dimittis". That name may seem exotic to us, but it is only the first two Latin words in St. Jerome's translation of

verse 29—"Now Dismiss." These words were said or sung by an old man named Simeon who knew, by the Holy Spirit, that he would live to see the Messiah. He was in the temple in Jerusalem when Mary and Joseph presented the baby Jesus on the eighth day after his birth. Simeon didn't just happen to be there. It was appointed by God. I'll let St. Luke tell the story: "**And [Simeon] came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word...'**" This is the one and only time we hear of this particular Simeon in the bible, but he makes quite an impression. Here is a man who trusted in God's promise so much, that he made it his life's work to watch for that promise's fulfillment. All he wanted out of life was to see the promised Savior. After holding Jesus in his arms, his earthly life was complete. His earthly purpose was fulfilled.

What was so fulfilling about just seeing and holding the baby Jesus? After all, at eight days old, Jesus might only have given the gurgles and coos of a newborn. It would be about 30 years before Jesus started teaching what is recorded in the Gospels. I believe the Holy Spirit had given Simeon the understanding that Jesus did not just speak the word of God—he is the Word of God. His faith in God's love and deliverance was such that he didn't need to understand everything about Jesus. He only needed to see Jesus to be fulfilled. In his song Simeon expressed it this way: ... **for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."**

Jesus not only proclaims salvation. Jesus embodies salvation. Our salvation literally comes through the breaking and killing of Jesus' body for our sake. I believe that even in heaven Jesus bears the marks of his earthly torture and death on his glorified body. To see Jesus however and wherever the eyes of faith might recognize him is to see our salvation! I believe that Simeon knew this to be true even in what he says was tender skin and ruddy complexion of a newborn babe. I pray that we might see our salvation in all the ways Jesus makes His presence known to us in word, sacrament, and neighbor.



May you experience a blessed Christmas and resolve to continue experiencing the revelation and the glory that seeing Jesus brings throughout the coming year.

In Christ's service,

Pastor Brian Shirey

Post Scripts:

- † Our lessons for this Thursday, December 24, 2020, Christmas Eve, are:
 - First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14
 - Second Reading: 1 John 4:7-16
 - Gospel: Matthew 1:26-38
- † Our lessons for this Sunday, December 27, 2020, The First Sunday after Christmas, are:
 - First Reading: Isaiah 61:10-62:3
 - Psalm 111
 - Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7
 - Gospel: Luke 2:22-40
- † Every day the news worsens about the present intensity of COVID-19. I am thankful that there are vaccines becoming available. But this will take time. It appears that the vaccines can bring the dawn of healing and release from this illness, but we must remind ourselves that we are still very much living in the darkness before the dawn. Dangerous moments continue to lie ahead. Please be careful and be prudent in all you do.
- † Sadly, the pandemic will continue through our celebration of Christmas. It will limit how we celebrate and share time together. The difficult decision has been made to continue with livestreaming worship without in-person attendance until January 10. This includes our Christmas Eve services. I'm sure this is a big disappointment to everybody—it certainly does to me, but care for and love of one another must be our first priority.
- † I will not be writing one of these little meditations the week after Christmas. I am just taking a little break. To those who take time to read my meditations, I am grateful.
- † Thank you for all who watched last Sunday's worship on the website. Please spread the word. It is one more tool for living out our life together at St. Luke's. Feel free to ask friends and family members unable to worship somewhere in person to join us online.