

Preaching Copy For: Presented and Set Aside: Luke 2:22-23, 26-32

Purification of Mary and The Presentation of Our Lord

Sunday, February 2nd, 2020

Text: Luke 2:22-23, 26-32

²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ And he 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, ²⁹ "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."

Exegetical Statement

Mary and Joseph come to the temple to perform what the law requires when a mother gives birth to her firstborn male child: a sacrifice that will declare her no longer unclean from childbirth, the presentation of the firstborn male child to the LORD and the payment that would "ransom" him back. As a remembrance of how all the firstborn male children at the first Passover in Egypt were spared death through the blood of the lamb of the door, the firstborn of every successive generation were claimed as set apart, holy to the Lord. Unlike Samuel, who stayed and became a servant in the Lord's house the parents are to redeem their firstborn son from this service by paying the redemption price of 5 shekels. On the way to do this, in either the court of the Gentiles or the Court of the Women they are intercepted by Simeon, a righteous believer in God who was given the promise by the Holy Spirit that He would see the promised Christ who was to be promised comfort for God's chosen held in bondage to sin. At the divinely appointed time he meets them and takes Baby Jesus into his arms. Then he gives the Spirit filled prophecy that this baby is the promised salvation from God, the light of revelation to the Gentiles and the light of God shining upon Israel from whom this promise was fulfilled. Mary and Joseph are blown away at this stranger's knowledge and prophecy concerning their son. Simeon blesses them all and then gives this additional prophecy to Mary: that her baby is appointed by God to cause the ruin (of those who will refuse to believe) and the resurrection (to faith now and eternal life to come for all who believe) in Israel. He will be a sign that causes division among the nation between those who believe by faith and those who refuse to believe. She will suffer in her heart as she watches Him suffer on the cross. His death and resurrection will reveal who is truly God's children made righteous by the faith of Abraham-faith in God's promises and revealed in Christ's fulfillment. Following Simeon Anna the prophetess takes up a more public proclamation to those worshipers in the temple who are still holding fast by faith to God's promise that He would provide the ransoming sacrifice that would deliver His people from death. Following this Mary and Joseph complete all that was called for in Moses' Law and return back home to Nazareth, where Jesus grows in strength of body and in wisdom, with the grace of God upon Him.

Focus Statement:

In Christ we have been made God's firstborn children, set aside in Baptism, redeemed by the sacrifice of the one whose death and resurrection empowered the salvation of the children in Egypt and all since. We behold Him just as Simeon in the real presence of the Lord's Supper and depart filled with the same Spirit of peace and joy

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We see our baptismal calling into the Church in a strictly selfish light: we are made members of His Church set aside only to live out our lives in the comfort of these church walls surrounded by those we like

What the hearer should do as a result:

As those set aside as His firstborn and blessed with the gifts given in His real presence, we are called to witness His salvation work as Simeon and Anna

Subject Sentence: Fed and set aside to witness His salvation

Introduction: Set Aside for a Purpose

Being Superbowl Sunday I could've talked about KC QB Mahomes faith:

Well as I was preparing for the message today, I realized there were a lot of directions that I could take. Today being Superbowl Sunday I could speak about the faith of the Kansas City Chief's Quarterback Patrick Mahomes who witnessed his faith on TV this past week saying that "Obviously I want to win every game, but I'm glorifying him every single time I'm out there". I could also talk about Groundhog Day: a day where intelligent people put their faith and trust in an oversized rodent to tell them when spring will come while ignoring the God who created the seasons and everything else.

Instead let's consider how in baptism we were made His children and were set aside:

Instead, I want us to begin by considering our baptisms; a very Lutheran thing to do. Most of us at some point were brought before the font to be baptized. Many of us as infants at a time before we can even remember. There we became God's precious children, declared holy to the Lord. Each one of you who has faith in Jesus has been called into God's family and has been set aside for His holy purpose. Placed here in the Church for a reason. Welcomed into the presence of the Lord while being left here on earth for a purpose.

Easy to forget we have a purpose here other than to enjoy our life and forgiveness:

And we often forget that. We forget that we have a purpose here. It's much better to see our baptism as the beginning of a daily washing away of sin and renewal of our faith so that we can carry on with life as normal. So that we can comfortably leave here and relax at home as I plan to do; with some chips, some BBQ wings, some hot dogs, my favorite beverage, and watch the Superbowl ads, while maybe catching some football in between.

How our lives have the comfortable self-centeredness of Groundhog Day

We leave here comfortable with our place in the kingdom and live our life as if it was Groundhog Day; as if it was like this movie starring Bill Murray:

[Play Clip]

Since Bill Murray is a weather forecaster living the same day over and over again, he uses his knowledge of what this day holds at first to his own advantage. He lives to please himself. And the catch is there is no consequences for his actions. No matter what he does he always wakes up in the same bed and its Groundhog Day all over again. Can we sometimes fall into the same rut ourselves? We sin. We are forgiven. We follow most of His commandments except the ones that make us uncomfortable, the ones that talk about being living sacrifices who are here not to please ourselves but to love others as much as we love ourselves. That one is makes us uncomfortable. That one shows us our sin. But we are forgiven. So its all good, right? But maybe we have been left here as His Church to do a little more than that. Maybe QB Patrick Mahomes testimony has something to say to you and to me too.

Gospel Lesson: the infant set aside to Redeem the World

Mary and Joseph come to the temple to obey law of purification and presentation:

But first let's turn to our Gospel Lesson. It opens with Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the temple. They are being obedient to what the law commanded them as parents of a firstborn baby boy. The laws says that 40 days after giving birth the parents are to come to the temple in Jerusalem and bring before the LORD a sacrifice through which God will declare the mother ceremonially clean after childbirth. They must also present their firstborn son before the LORD and redeem him from temple service with the price of 5 shekels. This was to remind the people of what happened during the 10th plague in Egypt. How God killed all the firstborn Egyptian males but spared all the Israelite boys because He told them to spread the blood a sacrificed lamb on the door posts of their houses. Redemption comes at a price. And the blood of that lamb stood in the place of a greater sacrifice to come. So that they might remember how God redeemed them He declared henceforth that all firstborn male children belonged to Him. Now this could've meant that at the appropriate age they would be taken to the temple and made to serve there as Samuel had done. But since God had called the tribe of Levi to perform those tasks all the other Jews could redeem their child back from service. The price the parents had to pay was 5 shekels. Now this was no where near the price of a human life. Just like the lambs blood the 5 shekels were a token, a place holder, a reminder that someone to come would pay the full price .

In what is a divine appointment Simeon is directed to this one particular infant:

And this leads us to the child who is at the center of our Gospel Lesson: The Baby Jesus. Before Mary and Joseph can take care of either Mary's purification or Jesus presentation, they are stopped by a stranger named Simeon. He is not a prophet per se, but he is a God-fearing man given a singular vocation by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has promised him that he will not depart this world in death to be with the Lord until he has seen the promised Messiah with his own eyes. And this will happen right there in the temple. Now Mary and Joseph couldn't call and arrange this meeting ahead of time. And there were other couples bringing infants to the temple for the same reason. Simeon had no idea who he should be looking for, but the Holy Spirit did. In what was a divine appointment he was led to one of the outer courts of the temple and right into the path of Mary and Joseph by the Spirit's leading.

No ordinary Child this is the Promised One who would redeem all by His blood:

And what he then takes up into his arms is no ordinary infant. He is holding the One whom all the faithful have been waiting for. The one who would grow to be a man, who would shed His blood as the perfect Lamb of Sacrifice. The One born to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The one whose blood empowered the blood spread on the Israelites doorposts in Egypt and prevented their children from dying. The One whose blood empowered all the blood sacrifices since then and made them a conduit by which God sends His grace and forgiveness. The One who would allow all those other children to be redeemed for only a ceremonial pittance because the Father was not going to give Him back. This child would grow to be a man to become the suffering servant promised by Isaiah, the shoot from the stump of Jesse who would reign on an eternal throne. The offspring of Abraham who would bless the whole world. The offspring of Eve who would strike the fatal blow to Satan's head on the cross. The only One who could pay the price to redeem all men from sin, death, and the devil. And that price was human blood. But it was more than enough because it was shed by the man who was also God. He died and rose again so that you might know your sins are forgiven and that He has purchased for you eternal life. He was set aside by the Father to be your Savior and mine. Your redeemer and mine.

The child whose death & resurrection empowers the continual baptismal washing:

This child is the One who makes you worthy in your baptism to be called a child of God. He is the One who called you to faith in Him by sending His Holy Spirit through the Gospel Message. He brought you into His Church. And it's by the faith that He gives to you that your sins continue to be washed away even as you keep sinning. This is that very special holy child that Simeon got to hold in his hands.

In the Lord's Supper you have a more intimate encounter with Jesus than Simeon:

Don't you wish you could've been there to hold that baby too in your own hands? Do you realize that you get to do something even better when you partake of the Lord's Supper? You get to hold Jesus' real presence in your hand. You get to take His true presence-His body and His blood inside you, joining with Him physically and spiritually. What you have in the Lord's Supper is a far more personal and intimate encounter with Jesus than even Simeon had!

Like Simeon and Anna we are empowered witnesses

We conclude the Lord's Supper singing Simeon's testimony which is ours too:

That's why we conclude the Lord's Supper with the "Nunc Dimittus". It's Simeon's testimony he gave as he held Jesus put into song. "O Lord now let your servant depart in heavenly peace. My eyes have seen the glory of Your redeeming grace. A light to lead the Gentiles unto Your holy hill. The glory of Your people, Your chosen Israel." This is the testimony that Simeon and Anna had been set aside and drawn to the temple that day to give. **They** told of God's redeeming grace that was about to be revealed. **But you and I have seen it in the Gospel**, have had it poured into us in Baptism, have partaken of it in the Lord's Supper. We have been blessed with His presence so that we might ring forth with this same testimony too.

Living our own version of Groundhog Day we miss what He is empowering us for:

But all too often we miss the import of what is going on. It can become just the song that marks the end of the Service of the Sacrament. That means this one hour plus service is drawing to a close: another couple prayers, a benediction, a final hymn and we can depart in our own idea of peace. The peace of fellowship and food in the Fellowship Hall, followed by some food and football at home, or our own version of Groundhog Day where everything is safe and comfortably the same. We've been given Christ's body and blood so we can relax and enjoy our earthly existence thinking that there is nothing else we have to do. And there isn't anything else we have to do; at least to be saved. That is all done. Finished. But perhaps there are things we should be willing to do **because** we have been saved.

The Church empowered by Communion sharing a better message than Anna/Simeon:

We have shared the experience of Simeon and Anna in a more powerful way through the Lord's Supper so that like them we could proclaim the same message they did. So that we could give an even greater message. So that we could tell about the salvation from God promised from the beginning of time that has now become reality. We have been given His Spirit who works to produce in us the desire to be the Church: to be those who are willing to share Christ's love using the gifts He engenders in us. To begin to use our time, our talents, and our treasures not just to benefit ourselves, but to help those less fortunate than us; those who are hurting, who are lost in the darkness of this broken world. We've been empowered in the Word and Sacrament to be the Gospel Light shining out. As we grow in our love and faith toward Christ, we grow in our willingness to be His hands and feet in the world. To be His Church. So that His Spirit can call them into the fellowship we have with one another and with our Savior. So that together we can sing with them "All glory to the Father, all glory to the Son, all glory to the Spirit, forever three in one. For as in the beginning, is now, shall ever be. God's Triune name resounding through all eternity." Jesus called us into His Church and left us here to be the conduits of His Gospel so that our confession might become their confession too.

Conclusion

In Baptism each one of you were called out of this world of darkness into the kingdom of light. You were presented to the LORD as His beloved child. You were washed and cleaned of all your sins by the Savior who is that baby Jesus. He paid the price of redemption for you, and for me, as well as for the whole world. He has come to us in the most personal and intimate way in the Lord's Supper to empower us to be His witnesses like Simeon and Anna were. So that while we watch the Superbowl we might look for opportunities to share Christ's love with those watching the game with us; maybe by pointing out how the Chief's Quarterback recognizes something more important than football: his faith in Jesus Christ. Maybe we can do as Bill Murray's character in Groundhog Day ended up doing; dedicating his life not toward how much fun he could have but how much he could bless those around him. You may not know what will happen tomorrow or even what will happen later today. You may not know when spring will arrive. But the Spirit who walks and lives with you knows all things and will help you in all things. And every time you fail to be a witness, fail to be a blessing, remember what you've been given. You've been given Christ's real presence. Not just to hold in your hand. But to live in your heart. Now and until the day you meet Him again. Amen.