



Lamb of God Lutheran Church – Columbus, Ohio

December 27, 2015 (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas)

Preacher: Pastor Timothy Wagner

Sermon Text: Luke 2:22-35

Sermon Theme: *The Perfect Peace of Christmas*

<sup>22</sup> *When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord* <sup>23</sup> *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”),* <sup>24</sup> *and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”*

<sup>25</sup> *Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.* <sup>26</sup> *It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.* <sup>27</sup> *Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,* <sup>28</sup> *Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:*

<sup>29</sup> *“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you now dismiss your servant in peace.*

<sup>30</sup> *For my eyes have seen your salvation,*

<sup>31</sup> *which you have prepared in the sight of all people,*

<sup>32</sup> *a light for revelation to the Gentiles*

*and for glory to your people Israel.”*

<sup>33</sup> *The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.* <sup>34</sup> *Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,* <sup>35</sup> *so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”*



Hello! My name is Simeon. I’m the man who met Mary and Joseph in the Temple, took the Baby Jesus in his arms, and sang a song. It wasn’t unusual that I was in the Temple that day. I had learned to love the Lord God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. I loved his holy Temple. I took my faith seriously. At home or at the Temple, my entire life centered on worshiping our gracious God. My heart was filled with thoughts about the Savior who was coming, about him who would bring comfort to his people through the forgiveness of sins. Yes, my life was a good life.

But it was a difficult time for our nation, politically, economically, and, definitely, spiritually. We Jews were always a scattered, struggling people. By the time Jesus was born, we had been defeated and dominated by one nation after another for hundreds of years. We learned to live without peace and looked anywhere and everywhere for some glimmer of hope. By the time the Roman Empire took control of our nation, many of my people were eager to see the Messiah, the one God promised to send to deliver his people, but they forgot entirely what the Scriptures said about the real Messiah and his mission of peace, how he would come to free his people from their sins. Instead they looked for a purely political Savior.

I couldn’t help but lament the spiritual condition of our nation. I often prayed for our people and remembered how God had always been faithful to his promises – and that he would surely send his promised Messiah – not to set us free from the hated Romans but to deliver us from our worst enemy, the devil.

Let me get back to that day in Jerusalem. I was blessed, because God had told me that I would not die before I had seen the Lord’s Christ. I didn’t really have to worry about death, about it catching me off guard. I didn’t have to worry about missing out on the Lord’s salvation. I knew that I would live until I had seen the Lord’s Christ.

Because of that you might expect me to hope that the Savior wouldn't come for a while, that he would wait until I had done all the living I wanted to do. Maybe you've had similar thoughts about his coming again. And to a certain extent, I can understand. You see, I loved life and appreciated it as a gift of God. I had no secret death wish. And the longer God waited to send his Son, the longer I could be expected to live.

But I never really looked at it that way. Even though his coming would mean that I could begin to anticipate death, like everyone else, in reality his coming would mean life for me and for all mankind! And so instead of hoping that the Savior would delay his coming, I earnestly waited for him to appear. I looked forward to that day when I could meet my Savior face to face.

And so when Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus into the temple that day, I was the happiest man on earth. This was the day I had waited for. Now I had seen my Savior. And now I was ready to die, if God so desired. Many people are so intent on living that they never prepare for death at all. They don't want to think about it. They don't want to think that some day they, too, will pass to the other side of the grave. And so when death does come, they find they're not ready for it. They're not ready to face their God and to give an account of their life to him. For them, it's a bad time to die, because they're not ready.

But, my friends, once you've seen the Lord's Christ...how could anything ever be the same again? Could anything else really matter anymore? When I saw him, I reached out and touched him and took him into my arms. Tears of joy began to run down my face, and I knew that nothing would ever be the same!

Can you imagine it? These hands of clay held the Divine Creator! These feeble human arms held the Word of God incarnate! These weak arms enfolded him who is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace! God was now as close to me as this baby in my arms.

In that amazing moment, I burst into song: "**Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel**" (v. 29-32).

I knew that now I was ready to die in peace. Because this Child had come to forgive every doubt I had ever experienced and every time I had loved life more than my Lord, my forgiven heart was already in heaven. With my own eyes I had seen the Salvation of God, the Glory of Israel, the Light of the Gentiles – the one who is my Prophet, Priest, and King, my God and Savior, my ALL!

I couldn't help but sing! Then I looked at the Child's parents. They were ordinary people, I suppose, poor in this world's things, but rich toward God. I could tell that they marveled at my words.

Then the Holy Spirit moved me to bless them and to prophesy. I told Mary, his mother: "**This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed**" (v. 34-35). The little one in my arms would be the Either/Or figure of human history, the One whose life and death and resurrection would divide all humanity into two groups: those for him and those against him, those who believe in him and those who don't.

And the Lord's salvation would not come without cost. I told Mary: "**A sword will pierce your own soul too**" (v. 35). She would be there to see her salvation being won by her Son's death penalty on the cross. She would be there to witness the terrible price her Son would pay because of our sins. Watching all that, seeing her Son suffer and die would pierce her soul like a sharp sword.

But – God be praised – her pain would be short-lived. On Easter Sunday she would see him again, touch him, hold him. And she would finally understand the full impact of his words, "**I am the Resurrection and the Life**" (John 11:25). But first would come the cross, the pain, the sword.

These days, when you celebrate Christmas, you concentrate mostly that sweet scene in Bethlehem's manger. But the cross was present from day one – even there in the stable. For our salvation could not be won without a terrible cost. God had to give up his own Son. One of your hymn writers got it right when he wrote: "**To this vale of tears he comes, Here to serve in sadness, That with him in heaven's fair homes We may reign**"

***in gladness. We are rich, for he was poor; Is not this a wonder? Therefore praise God evermore Here on earth and yonder***” (*Christian Worship Hymn 64*).

Like me, you have seen him. You have heard his voice, calling you to turn from your sins and assuring you of your forgiveness. You have even touched him, in that special meal you call the Lord’s Supper. As you touch him there, like me, you see your salvation. And so it’s appropriate that you sing, as the Church has for centuries now, the same song I sang, ***“Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace, according to your Word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before all people!”*** May that meal and your Savior’s presence and promise always bring you real joy and peace—the perfect peace of Christmas.

The Christmas present our heavenly Father gave to the world in that stable in Bethlehem doesn’t change from year to year. The ransom he paid, the heaven he opened, the hope he inspires — all this remains forever unchanged. ***“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord!”*** He is the perfect peace of Christmas—peace between you and God, peace that transcends understanding, peace that fills every corner of our hearts, peace that simply makes us sing! Amen.

## Lessons for December 27

### Isaiah 45:20-25

- <sup>20</sup> “Gather together and come;  
assemble, you fugitives from the nations.  
Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood,  
who pray to gods that cannot save.
- <sup>21</sup> Declare what is to be, present it—  
let them take counsel together.  
Who foretold this long ago,  
who declared it from the distant past?  
Was it not I, the LORD?  
And there is no God apart from me,  
a righteous God and a Savior;  
there is none but me.
- <sup>22</sup> “Turn to me and be saved,  
all you ends of the earth;  
for I am God, and there is no other.
- <sup>23</sup> By myself I have sworn,  
my mouth has uttered in all integrity  
a word that will not be revoked:  
Before me every knee will bow;  
by me every tongue will swear.
- <sup>24</sup> They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone  
are righteousness and strength.’ ”  
All who have raged against him  
will come to him and be put to shame.
- <sup>25</sup> But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel  
will be found righteous and will exult.

### Colossians 3:12-17

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### Luke 2:22-35

<sup>22</sup> When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

<sup>29</sup> "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you now dismiss your servant in peace.

<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles

and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup> The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup> so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."