

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, and has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. (Hebrews 1:1–2)
Amen.

Luke 2:25–32 (NKJV) — 25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 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 So he came by 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 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

This is the word of the Lord.

Lord, let us, your servants, be set free in peace according to your word. Amen.

Songs of Salvation

3. A Song to the Ends of the Earth

In Jesus name, who is, who was, and who is to come, our Savior in flesh and in glory, dear fellow redeemed,

One of the things I remember as a child was the anticipation that would build in the days leading up to Christmas. What would be in that finely wrapped box under the tree? Oh, how I wanted just a glimpse, just a peek to see what's inside. But as my mother would remind me, I had to wait.

So also Simeon waited. But not forever. The Holy Spirit had revealed that before death, Simeon would see the Christ with his own eyes. Like a gift, the Christ had remained in the finely wrapped prophecies of the OT. For years and years, the anticipation was built in these promises of the OT. Prophecies like Malachi two Sundays ago spoke of the Lord coming suddenly to the Temple. And Isaiah 49 which we just considered on Sunday spoke of the Servant of the Lord who would not only restore the promised inheritance to Israel. He would be a Savior to the Gentiles also, to us, and to the ends of the earth.

This man, Simeon, was just and devout. He was waiting in faith for "the consolation of Israel." And NOW he would have a glimpse. NOW he would finally get a peek at

what so long remained concealed in the promises of the OT. The Christ brings OT prophecy into NT song.

**LET US JOIN SIMEON IN A SONG OF SALVATION THAT HAS COME OUT OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT ... INTO THE TEMPLE ... AND ECHOES TO THE ENDS
OF THE EARTH.**

We call this the NUNC DIMITTIS: "Now dismiss." This Latin title comes from those first words of Simeon: "... You are letting Your servant depart."

A better translation of this word would probably be "set free." This word in the Greek means literally, "to release." Simeon declares "You are releasing your servant in peace."

This word is often used in a legal sense of someone a prisoner being released. In these contexts it means to be set free from obligation or debt. In Matthew 18 Jesus uses this word in a parable. He says, *Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. (Matthew 18:23)* ... The King discovers a servant who owes him a great sum of debt and is unable to pay it. The King threatens to find vindication by selling the slave. The servant pleads that the King would show patience and allow him more time to repay. *Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. (Matthew 18:27)*

The servant was "let go." Notice, parallel to his "release" is that he is "forgiven." That is, the King both freely forgave the debt and also released from any obligation to work it off.

See how this same "release" has come to Simeon. "Lord, now You are releasing Your servant in peace." He is being set free from obligation and debt. As with the songs of Mary and Zacharias, Simeon's song centers in "salvation." "You are letting your servant be set free in peace ... because my eyes have seen Your deliverance."

The coming of Christ is spiritual liberation – release from the debt of the Law, release from guilt, release from sin ... release in peace.

Without the coming of Christ we remain prisoners of our sinful flesh. The Law demands what we could never afford. For the Law does not define "good" as the world defines it. It declares good according to the ultimate goodness – God. The breaking of the least of the commandments – anger, a sharp word, a lustful thought – is to come up short of all; is to remain in the prison of death. As God said to Adam, in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die.

Recall in the parable how the servant offered to repay the debt. 10,000 talents was much more than a servant could ever hope to earn in a lifetime. So rather than offering him a chance to make good on a debt he could never fulfill, the King "released him and forgave him the debt." This was not just patience, it was grace.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has done what we could never. He has paid that debt with His holy precious blood. He has fulfilled the works of righteousness that is required by those who would dwell in the presence of God. In Christ we are released and set free “in peace.”

v29 “According to Your word.” For those who lived prior to the birth of Christ, having not seen the fulfillment that we have seen, this was what faith clung to. As the Christ remained still wrapped and packaged in the OT, they believed that the Savior that was inside would eventually be revealed “according to God’s word.” The Old Testament believers were saved because they believed that God would keep His word. They believed the Word written in Malachi that we considered two Sundays ago. They believed the Lord would come suddenly to His Temple to purify their imperfections. They believed the Word written by Isaiah that we considered last Sunday. They believed that the Servant of the LORD would become a Ruler of all kings ... that He would say to these prisoners of sin: “Go forth!” ... that He would bring eternal release and peace to God’s people. What Simeon says here is that God has kept His word. He has opened and given the gift just as He promised.

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation

Salvation moves with Christ. Where Jesus goes, there goes salvation. Where Jesus is preached, there is salvation. Recall how Mary herself experienced, “the power of the Highest overshadowing her.” We see in the virgin conception, the Creator entering into the creation. Salvation then moved to Bethlehem where the angels cried out: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” God’s saving presence has filled the earth with peace. His physical presence among men was the glory of God in strips of cloth and a cattle shed.

“Now,” Simeon says. The movement of salvation has come to the Temple, to the arms of Simeon.

Notice the Spirit’s language of faith. Our “eyes see” salvation. He is a “light to bring revelation.” Don’t be mistaken by the paintings. Jesus was not glowing and had no halo over His head. He was a baby. He needed to be carried in. The Spirit’s language of faith is describing the eyes of faith that see God’s saving presence dwelling in the Temple. He sees “the glory of God’s people Israel” laying before him.

This saving presence of continues to move. It moves throughout Galilee, in the teaching and miracles of Jesus Christ. It moves to Jerusalem where the presence of God dwells in the sacrifice of salvation. It moves to the ascension and exaltation of our Lord as salvation is left in the mouths of His disciples.

It is ***prepared before the face of all peoples. (v.31)*** The saving presence of Christ is laid before the face of all peoples. Not just for the Jews, rather this light will extend through

the mission work of the disciples to reach Gentiles. This shining presence of the Christ is sent forth from Pentecost and echoes unto the end of the earth. It keeps going and going where ever He is proclaimed and is seen where ever He is believed. Thus we find the light of the Gospel has come to us.

Both in OT times and NT, the saving glory of God has always dwelt where His Word and Sacraments are being received. The glory of God's people should be thought of as God's saving presence among us.

Consider the placement of this song of Simeon in *The Lutheran Hymnal's* Order of Holy Communion. Take a look at p.29. The NUNC DIMITTIS comes directly after the Lord's Supper. What a fitting response to the Word and Sacrament. "My eyes have seen Your salvation, the glory of Your people." Here in bread and wine the movement of the Lord's saving presence has come to His Temple all over again. Where believers gather, there is Temple of the Lord ... there God dwells with His people.

The true Israel has always been the believers. The glory of God is not the physical nation, but the chosen spiritual descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is none other than the body of Christ, the union of all Jews and Gentiles who believe. The glory of Israel has come to us in the preaching of the gospel in word and sacrament. Yes, the Christ child is set before us, dwells among us, and lives in us.

Well, is the anticipation for Christmas increasing in your household? Are you or your kids longing to get a glimpse of what's inside those packages?

Just like Simeon we are in a waiting period. For even though we have gained a glimpse into this gift heaven, we haven't received the fullness of this gift yet. Outwardly we, like Simeon, still wait for "the Consolation of Israel;" that is, we await the full comfort of salvation.

We witness the growing evil in this world, the senseless shootings, the unrest overseas, with the ever increasing propaganda of this generic god who teaches us to look to ourselves for answers and provides absolutely no confidence or comfort. We long for the Comfort of Israel.

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the Lord's hand Double for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:1-2)

Take comfort in the fact God dwells among us and will protect us. He has given up His only Son to redeem what is most precious – your soul. The warfare over sin and death is ended. While Satan rages on in the evil he promotes, we rest in the triumph of the cross and the resurrection. These evil works hold no power over us and cannot rob us of the heavenly gift that is ours.

Luke 2:25-32

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Remember what God has brought to you here. This gift of salvation has gone forth before all peoples. To the ends of the earth God has gone to find you. See in this gathering of believers, here among us, that gift so long anticipated. See in Word and Sacrament a peek into heaven, where you join the full assembly of God's people in triumphant peace. Say, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." Know that you depart this world in peace – an end to every tear and the beginning of full communion with Christ forever. This is "according to His Word."

Let us ever shine forth that light that God's salvation would continue to move and dwell in more hearts and homes. As the burdens of the busy holiday season come upon you, may you be set free from any earthly distraction to sing of the peace that has come to you this Christmas day. May your eyes behold this salvation which God has sent to the ends of the earth, which has found you, which has saved you. Christ has indeed brought OT prophecy into NT song; so sing!

Amen.