

## Songs of Advent (Postlude): Simeon's Salvation

Luke 2:25-35



Many of you have likely heard someone utter the phrase, “Now I can die happy,” whether in real life or elsewhere. Someone completed something that they’d *always wanted*; or something that they had hoped for for *so long* finally happened, so now it’s as if their major reason for living has been achieved, and they can die happy.

After the Red Sox won their first World Series in 86 years back in 2004, ESPN writer Bill Simmons wrote a book titled, **“Now I Can Die in Peace.”** He wrote that the Red Sox winning the series meant “No more worrying about living

an entire life ... followed by death *without* seeing the Red Sox win a Series.” And as Chicago residents, many of us can perhaps understand the sentiment.

But there’s another phrase which means almost the same thing, the latin words “*Nunc dimittis.*” Literally meaning “**Now dismiss...**”

This version of the phrase has shown up in a number of places.

For instance, one story is recounted of the jazz musician John Coltrane, who released his album “A Love Supreme” in 1965. It is said that one night after performing the album on stage, he put down his saxophone and walked off stage, and simply said, “*Nunc dimittis.*” Basically, I’ve played the piece *so perfectly* that I can die happy.

Or there’s Thomas Jefferson, one of our founding fathers, who wrote a letter to then General Andrew Jackson in 1821, and spoke of the University of Virginia which was in its infancy at the time. Jefferson wrote, “I flatter myself it [the University] will assume a standing secondary to nothing in our country. if I live to see this I shall sing with cheerfulness the song of old Simeon ‘Nunc dimittes Domine.’”

The idea of a life’s **mission** or a life’s **goal** or a life’s **purpose** being completed is at the heart of our passage today, and we look at the passage in terms of three propositions:

***Jesus Fulfills the Law*** (vss 25-27)

***Jesus Bring Salvation to Jew and Gentile*** (vss 28-32)

***Jesus Reveals the Thoughts of the Heart*** (vss 33-35)

In the first proposition, we find that Jesus is brought to the temple in Jerusalem when He is 40 days old. How do we know this? St. Luke tells us in verse 22 that ‘according to the law of Moses’ they came to Jerusalem to make an offering of two pigeons or turtledoves. This tells us that they have Leviticus 12 in mind! A woman was unclean after giving birth. After the birth of a son, she was unclean for 7 days, he was circumcised on the 8th, and then after 33 more days of uncleanness the offering was given. But in Leviticus 12:8ff, a special allowance is given for poor families. Whereas the normal sacrifice was one lamb and one bird, poor families could bring 2 birds. So Jesus’ beginnings were not among the rich elite!

Simeon is one who is waiting for the “consolation of Israel,” or the “comfort of Israel” (Greek word is παράκλησις). This points to passages like Isaiah 40:1, as well as to the work of the Holy Spirit (who is also called the παράκλητος, or the “Comforter”; see also Acts 9:31).

All of this points to Christ’s coming to *fulfill the Law*.

In the second proposition, found mainly in the *Nunc Dimittis*, the song itself. In it, Simeon says he “sees” God’s salvation (cf. also two uses of “see” in vs. 26)—not his *future* salvation but his Salvation. Additionally, he sees a light of revelation to the Gentiles, in fulfillment again of passages such as those in Isaiah 42, 49, & 56: that the Jews *and* Gentiles may be part of God’s people.

Finally, Simeon gives a prophecy directly to Mary. In it, he describes the work of Christ as that of a “sword” which moves throughout the land and divides. It divides families (Mt. 10:34-39) and pierces to the heart (Heb. 4:12). It removes any chance at neutrality: everyone is bound to either accept it or reject it.

### ***Communion Meditation:***

As we come now to the Lord’s Table, let us remember again Simeon’s “sight”. The Lord had revealed to him that he would not “**see** death” until He had “**seen** the Lord’s Christ.”

When he “**saw**” the infant Christ, and held Him in his arms, he was able to exclaim, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart ... **in peace**.”

In Jesus Christ, Simeon saw his **peace with God**.

In Jesus Christ, Simeon saw his **salvation**.

In Jesus Christ, Simeon saw the fall of some, but the **resurrection** of many.

This Table is likewise a Table of **peace with God**. In it, let us **truly SEE** our salvation. Let us **SEE** Christ.

Not as if His physical molecules are somehow merged with the grain and yeast and grapes of this meal . . . but let us ***in the eating of this meal*** see *in Christ* our salvation.

In our eating, with the eyes of faith, let us likewise look ahead to the ***resurrection*** that we will share because of our *Union with Christ*.

This meal communicates to us the grace of God, and *seals it to our hearts*. And thereby, this meal ***reveals the thoughts of the heart***. Eating and drinking at this Table communicates your faith in all that Christ has promised us: and this includes His promises to our children.

And it is because of that promise that all of you who have been united to Jesus Christ through baptism in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and who, by faith, are members of His body the church, are invited to dine with Him.

### ***Word of Commission:***

We go now to a world with many who—by their self-centeredness, and their deceit, and their sin—manifest the thoughts of their hearts to be ***unto death***.

But brothers and sisters, you whose hearts are revealed to be aimed at ***resurrection***, take this hope and this peace with you.

Remember that no one you meet can be neutral: that the truth of Christ gives them but two options. And as the Spirit leads you, call these to bow the knee to the Lord.

In *everything done* by those around you, and in *everything YOU* do, the thoughts of the heart are revealed: for everything anyone does is either done *unto the Lord* or *unto the self*.

Let us seek, in everything we do, to please our Lord who has ***fulfilled the Law***, and ***brought salvation...***

And thereby, let us be a “***light for revelation***” to the nations.

