

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany; The Presentation of our Lord; February 2, 2025

+ Luke 2:22-40 +

“Presenting Jesus”

When the time came for their purification according the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (As it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male will be called holy to the Lord.”) And they came to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, waiting for the comfort of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary according to the law, Simeon took him into his arms and praised God. He said,

**Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word,
because my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared before the face of all people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.**

Joseph and the child’s mother were amazed at the things that were spoken about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Listen carefully, this child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Anna, a prophetess, was there. She was a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. She had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, and then she was a widow of eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple complex, since she was worshipping with fasting and prayers night and day. She kept speaking about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had accomplished everything according to the law of Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town, Nazareth. The child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on him.

Joseph and Jesus’ mother Mary – isn’t it interesting how Luke always calls Mary his mother, but never calls Joseph his father? – present him at the temple and make the appropriate sacrifice. There was a law in the book of Exodus requiring every firstborn male to be dedicated to the Lord. If it was a firstborn male animal, the animal itself would be sacrificed. If it was a human son, a substitute-sacrifice, based on the income of the parents, would be brought to the temple together with the child. So, before God learned how to walk, he relied on his parents to keep the law of God for him. Think on that for a while, and you will need a couple aspirin! But it’s true. Mary and Joseph wrapped up their little boy who made the universe and brought him to the temple to present him!

There are a couple presentations of Jesus Christ that God wants you to make, too. But before you present him anywhere to anyone, you first need to do what Joseph and Mary did: take him in your arms exactly as he is. Let go of every fake version of Christ, of every imposter Jesus. It was what so many follow Christ like to do, and what every follower does at least occasionally. We hold onto a version of Jesus that we like

better than the real One. I would rather hold the Jesus who tells me it's okay to hold my grudges; who never said to give Caesar what is Caesar's; there is the Jesus who wants you to be happy all the time, who does require you to carry your crosses behind him. These are the Jesuses who wink at our pride and tell us to go first and be first. Sinners do it often: we contort the Son of God into what our sinful heart wants him to be, instead of what he is. God wants his Son presented – the real Son of God and Son of Mary, who she and Joseph took into their arms and presented in that temple.

They did not just present Jesus to his heavenly Father and make the required sacrifice. They also presented Jesus to a man named Simeon. Simeon also took the real Jesus into his arms, too. And this is why you want to the same thing: when you hold the true Jesus, you hold salvation.

Every law God ever gave – including those laws that looked ahead to his arrival – Jesus kept them all perfectly. He kept them perfectly because he was not Joseph's son – he was conceived by the Holy Spirit perfectly in the womb of his mother, and so he went on to keep God's law perfectly for you and me. And when you hold Jesus, you hold salvation because he laid down his holy life. A sword pierced his side and his mother's soul that day. But by the blood he shed, you are saved from the punishment you deserved for your sins.

So, after you take the real Jesus into your arms and take hold of salvation in him, here is how you should present him. Hold Jesus – all of his holiness, all of his suffering and death for your sins, his resurrection that guarantees yours – hold him and hold him up to your heavenly Father. Present your Savior Jesus to the Father and join in Simeon's song: **“Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation.”** Lord, you have made a promise in your Son, that everyone who believes in him will not perish in hell but have eternal life. I hold him by faith; that salvation is mine. It's mine because your word says he is for everyone in this world. **“...my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”**

Take the real, saving Jesus in your arms. He's for everyone, including you. And present him to God as the righteousness you need to depart this world in peace and enter the glory of heaven.

And, until you get there, you have many more opportunities to present Jesus. If you do the math on Anna, she must have been well over a hundred years old, even if she had married very young. She heard Simeon's song. And although the boy Jesus left the temple to return home with his parents and continue his holy life, Anna also kept Jesus in the temple, and kept presenting the little Savior to everyone who would listen. **Standing nearby at that very hour, she gave thanks.** And then she kept presenting him. She saw in Jesus God keeping his word, his promise of salvation – and she presented that word of salvation in Jesus until the Lord dismissed her in peace.

You must start by presenting Jesus to the Father as your promised Savior. Then give thanks. And then present Jesus as the Savior of all to all in your world. Present him to your spouse, to your children, to your brothers and sisters at this church, and to your unbelieving friend who has already told you to put in a sock in it. Anna was a prophetess; Simeon was righteous and devout, which includes thorough knowledge of God's Word. But if you know only as much as Simeon sang in his song, you are qualified to present Jesus and his salvation. In fact, even if you only know only what Simeon said in his song, God will fill your heart with thanks and open your lips to present Jesus, too.

It is not that everyone we present him to will receive him, or hold on to him as their Savior. Some will, some won't. Simeon knew it: **"Listen carefully, this child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken again, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed."** But the same Spirit that moved Simeon to wait and look for the Lord's Christ, to come into the temple courts and hold him in his arms and present him to the Lord as his Savior – that same Spirit will work in hearts to believe what Simeon sang: that Jesus is the Savior of all, and my Savior.

This Epiphany season is a time to remember that Jesus' salvation is an epiphany, what Simeon called **"a light for revelation to the Gentiles."** Light has to be shined. A revelation must be revealed. The epiphany of salvation for all in Christ Jesus must be presented. We are the ones to do it. And we are in a world that needs it.

If you don't believe me, listen carefully to what people say about Jesus. Who they think is (if they think anything of him at all), all the different versions that get created to suit each individual desire. How he gets twisted and turned and used for every cause except the one he actually came for: eternal salvation.

So first, take for yourself, into your own arms, the Jesus who his mother and Joseph brought to the temple. Like Simeon, take him, his holiness, his cross, his empty tomb, and present him to your Father in heaven as everything you need to depart this world in peace; the Savior of all and your Savior, too. Then, full of thanks, show him to others, too. Be like Anna, and keep speaking about him, keep presenting him. Amen.