

# MID-WEEK ADVENT 3

***The Nunc Dimittis***  
**December 19 2018**

Luke 1:39-56

*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word.*

This is how Simeon begins his canticle—  
the third and final canticle of our Advent series.

Nunc Dimittis is short for, “Now let depart.”  
However, what Simeon actually says is a little less sanitized.  
He says, “Master, let your slave go free in peace.”

This reverence comes not from Simeon himself but from the Holy Spirit.  
In connection with Simeon and his canticle St. Luke mentions the Holy Spirit  
no less than three times.

The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon.  
The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would see the Christ before he  
saw death.  
And the Holy Spirit lead Simeon into the Temple the day that Mary and  
Joseph brought Jesus.  
What Simeon knows about the little Savior in his arms he knows only  
because of the Holy Spirit.  
St. Paul will later write that no one can say, “Jesus is Lord  
accept by the Holy Spirit.”

Imagine if you were to take one of the newborns in our congregation—take him up in  
your arms and say “Here he is. The Lord's Messiah—God in human flesh. I hold the  
Creator of the universe in my arms.”

That's close to what Simeon did.

To his eyes that little Jewish baby boy looked no different than any other.  
Contrary to artist depictions there was no glowing halo around the child's  
head. Nor, did He have any unique beauty or majesty that would make  
one look at Him and say,  
“He's obviously the Christ.”  
In other words, he looked like any other little baby boy.

For Simeon to call the little baby Jesus the Lord's Messiah was no small statement of faith.

With his eyes Simeon saw nothing but a little human being,  
but with his ears Simeon heard something altogether different.

It's no less of a miracle worked by the Holy Spirit that you do the same—that you recognize Jesus to be your Lord and Savior, using your ears instead of your eyes, believing God's word.

So the same Holy Spirit who was at work in Simeon all those years ago is at work in you today.

In this way, the Holy Spirit makes Simeon's song your own—  
to recognize this Jesus to be the Lord's Messiah means that you too have the Holy Spirit upon you.  
You too have the revelation of the Spirit.  
You too have been led by the Spirit to Jesus.

To think that we have been drawn by the Holy Spirit into the Christmas story...  
but it is no story, is it? It's history.

The angel announcing to Mary that Jesus would be born to her.

The census that led Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem,  
the angels proclaiming the gospel to the shepherds,  
these things happened—in time and space.

They are facts.

And the same Holy Spirit in those days is the same Holy Spirit now.

What's amazing about Simeon's song is that Simeon not only knows who Jesus is, He also knows what Jesus has come to do.

*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word,  
for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation...*

In fact, Simeon seems to know something of how God's salvation will come about.

He told Mary "this Child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also)." Only later will we see that Simeon's words are fulfilled by the cross, of God giving Himself into the hands of His enemies.

God Himself being rejected by men,  
and killed by Mankind.

What we meant for His evil,  
He will use for our good.

Mary's Child is not just called Emanuel, God with us—  
He is called Jesus for He shall save the people from their sins.

The Son of God does not just descend from heaven  
and become incarnate in human flesh because the human  
race makes for such great dinner company.

He is God with us so that He might be God for us.  
The little Child has come to have His blood shed by  
us.

That we need a Savior is not in itself very good news.

That we must have a Savior tells us one thing: we cannot save ourselves.

St. Paul says it this way...there is none righteous, no not one...  
there is none who understands  
there is none who seeks after God.

Well, St. Paul what about...

No—there are none who seeks after God...

they have all turned aside,  
they have together become unprofitable.

There is none who does good, no not one.

The law says this to us so that our mouths might be stopped.

I mean, do you think your will—your mind or heart are hid from God?

Do you think that God doesn't know...

that you've coveted what others have...

That you've been discontent with what God has given you...

how you have set your mind on what pleases you,  
instead of on what pleases Him?

How you've used your mind to rehearse grudges and cover up lies.

That you've willed evil against others...

See...

The Law of God shuts every human mouth so that each one of us would hide our heads  
in our hands in utter shame.

So, if you know you are a sinner...  
 if you know that you have no hope but grace  
 then Simeon has good news for you.  
 The little baby he holds in his arms is God's salvation.  
 --grace and truth incarnate.

The offering He will offer to God for you is nothing less  
 than His own holy flesh and His own holy blood.

His high altar is not made of gold but of wood.  
 And there on His cross He offers Himself in your place  
 so that now when the Creator looks at you, His creation,  
 He says once more, "It is good."  
 He has come to be humbled,  
 hated,  
 rejected,  
 tortured,  
 and put to death.  
 He has come to do whatever it takes  
 to save you,  
 and save you He has.

He is as Simeon says, "God's salvation."  
 Held by Simeon's sinful hands, He is Simeon's Savior.  
 And the miracle is,  
 He puts himself into your hands as well,  
 for He is your Savior too.

When does the Savior of the world,  
 when does Jesus Christ put Himself flesh and blood into your outstretched hands?

When He gives into your very hands the bread that is His body and the wine that is His  
 blood.

Led by the Holy Spirit the Ancient Church realized that we are no different than Simeon,  
 for into the hands of sinners, into your hands the Lord Jesus gives Himself.

This is why there is no better song to sing after Holy Communion than Simeon's song.  
 After the Lord cradles Himself in your hands and on our lips. It is them we sing,

*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word,  
for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all  
people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel.*

We may depart from the Lord's table in peace, a peace not like the world gives...a peace that passes understanding...the peace that can come only from Jesus Himself when he gives himself into the into your hands and says, "for the forgiveness of your sins."

Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

Slain for you and eaten by you.

His blood now paints the doorway of your body and the angel of death passes over you...for the life is in the blood.

His life is in you.

St. Paul says that every time we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

So, every time we have the Lord's Supper

Christ crucified is proclaimed in our midst,

as Simeon says, "...before the face of all people."

The light Himself is in our midst

enlightening we who are Gentiles.

Here's my final thought on this last mid-week Advent service...

The Holy Spirit told Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. When Simeon does see Him his first words are, "*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace...*"

What Simeon is saying is this: it's OK now for me to die.

It's OK—for I have seen the Lord's salvation, and the very same is true for you.

Because of Christmas, it's safe—

it's ok for you to die,

for His name is Jesus and He has saved you from your sins.

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.