

Purification of Mary and Presentation 2025
Luke 2:22-40 (ESV)

At that time, “it had been revealed to [Simeon] by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Lord’s blessings to all of you, dear ones, on this feast of the purification of St. Mary and the presentation of our Lord.

Once again, we are given to celebrate this important feast in the church year, and once again there are many beautiful things we’re given to see as the holy family completes the course of their pilgrimage and journey to Jerusalem and also as St. Simeon meets them there in fulfillment of God’s Word and with Simeon himself looking to complete the pilgrimage of his own life.

Though I would say, there are some things we encounter in our appointed text, which it often seems we hurry past, some things which, if we’re being honest, I think we’d rather run from, quite frankly. But, of course, like St. Simeon, we can’t, or at least it won’t do us any good.

As you heard me say, Simeon had it revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

The Spirit revealed that he wouldn’t see death, as if death were some unwelcome visitor, some silent stranger whom Simeon would soon see and meet, and who would suddenly lead him from the course of his pilgrimage through this life to depart to another place.

Dear ones, inasmuch as Simeon needed to prepare to see the Christ according to the revelation given him, he also needed to prepare to see death.

And as our text makes clear, the revelation he’s given means Simeon is not the Lord over his own life. He’s not the Master of his own destiny—none of us are.

All our years, all our days, every step, every breath—the whole course of our life in its entirety—is seen and known by the Lord, as is how we will finish our course. And unless Christ returns beforehand, we will all meet death and depart from the journey of this life at an hour and a place and in a manner that is seen and known by our Lord. So, like Simeon, we need to be prepared.

Now, here some of you might say, “Well, Pastor, I’m in good condition right now. I’m not so sure I really need to concern myself with such things, at least not for a good while. Surely, I still have a while yet before the time of my departure will come.”

And dear ones, to this, I would say, “May God grant it. May He grant every one of you long life upon the earth, with fulness and satisfaction in your journey. May God grant it to you.” But the fact is, you do not know exactly when or where or how you will see death and meet that unwelcome, silent stranger to depart. And I would certainly think a very tragic event that took place just this past week would convince you of that.

Just a few days ago, I'm sure you saw, a commercial plane departed from Wichita, not far from here, not far at all, heading to D.C. only to crash into an Army helicopter, and more than 60 were met with death. Any one of us could have been on that plane.

And the truth is, even if we're healthy and strong right now, unless Christ comes first, it's only a matter of time before death visits us and overwhelms us.

Even if we flee, there's no place so distant and remote that death won't find us.

There's no bunker or fortress we could build whose walls of stone and steel are so strong and secure that death cannot still breach them and extract you by force.

Like St. Simeon, we must prepare to see death, to complete the course of our pilgrimage and depart.

And that is why, above all else, like St. Simeon, we must run and lay hold of Jesus Christ in faith. He is the One in Whom the Scriptures are fulfilled, in Whom all God's promises find their Yes and Amen. He's the One Who journeyed from heaven's throne to the cross to atone for all our sins. He went and shed His holy blood for us and conquered death by His death.

And dear ones, here shortly Pr. Wright will lift up the bread that is Christ's body and the cup in which is Christ's blood, and like Simeon, your eyes will see the salvation of God, by which death itself is undone.

And because you receive Christ in true repentance and faith today, similar to how Simeon did long ago, you can depart this life in peace as well. Come where it may, when it may, how it may, you need not fear death.

Because for all its strength, finally death could not conquer the Christ, nor can it now pry you away and separate you from Him and all the saints. Death itself cannot dissolve our union with Christ and with those who've now received their rest in Him and entered into eternal repose.

Where once death was once a terrible tyrant, Christ has come as the Prince of Peace and has now made it His lowly slave.

Christ has made death bow to Him and do His bidding in bringing us to Himself and bringing us home. In that day when, we as the baptized faithful, complete our pilgrimage and are homeward bound to heaven above, death is the servant that helps transport us to that place where our true citizenship really is and where the pure bliss of paradise with Christ will be found.

You need not fear death, dear ones. But, if I may be so bold, you do need to prepare.

And in closing, I have a couple very practical things in mind, along with what I've already said, that I'm confident will help you do just that.

Of course, you need no one to explain the importance of making arrangements and getting things in order when it comes to finalizing your will, but I'd recommend you also, when you can, to come and register your wishes for your funeral with the church office.

Dear ones, it would be an honor for Pr. Wright and I to help you select and keep on file what hymns and biblical texts you personally would like to see used when you're laid to rest, so that even in death, after you've departed to be with the Lord, you can make a good confession of faith and help bring the comfort and peace of Christ to those who love you at a time when they need it dearly.

I'd like to encourage you also, if you haven't already, to make it a habit to gather with your family in devotion each night before you go to sleep. Come together as a family and prayerfully read the holy Scriptures, acknowledging your sinfulness in light of God's Word together, and together asking God for mercy for the sake of Christ.

You might also pick a good, strong hymn to learn by heart and sing together—one you'd like to sing with each other as the years go by and also in the day when those whom you dearly love are visited by death and depart to be with the Lord and they take their place in the choirs of heaven and join you singing in the symphony of the saints. But again, and above all else, cling to Christ alone in faith.

He is the Prince of Peace. He's made peace with the Father on our behalf, and in Him we live and depart in peace.

To the same Jesus Christ be all the glory forever and ever. Amen.