SIMEON'S SONG OF PEACE AND LIGHT EPIPHANY

LUKE 2:29-32 JAN 6, 2015

²⁹ "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation

31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

One of the interesting things about songs is that it may take only the first few words or a little as three notes for you to recognize the whole song and know what comes next. This can be a fun game to play.

Today, as we begin the season of Epiphany in which we celebrate Christ being made known to world, we consider Song of Simeon, often called Nunc Dimittis, in which he declares recognition of our whole salvation upon seeing only the very beginning, tiny baby Jesus. And we note what we also are able to recognize.

WE BEGIN BY LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD WE BEGIN TO SEE GOD'S SALVATION WE BEGIN TO SHARE GOD'S LIGHT

WE BEGIN BY LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

²⁹ "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

You can walk through an art museum or a scenic park or listen to a concert and miss more than you notice unless you have guide, or maybe earphones in museum, that tells you: watch or look closely for this, listen for this. It was there all along but it may take these helpful words to make you say, "Oh, there it is!"

What was it that caused Simeon to recognize Jesus as Christ when few others seemed to?

Could it have been how his parents acted,

Could it have been how his parents acted,
knowing already how special he was.
or way he alertly looked around at his Father's house?
I don't think it was any of this but it was same thing
that caused the shepherds to find and recognize him.

They were first given God's word,
telling them what they were going to see.
How did the Magi know when they saw the star
that it meant a new king was born in Israel?
I suspect that their libraries contained books of the Bible
that an ancient Magi named Daniel often read,
containing prophesy that "a star shall rise out of Jacob
and a scepter out of Israel."

Simeon had been given a promise by God

that he would not die before he saw the Lord's Christ.

It was believing that word of promise that brought him here and caused him to recognized Jesus for who he was and recognize what it meant for him, that now he could depart in peace, just as God had said to him in his word.

I believe the same is true for us today.

Others may look at beauty in nature and see random chance But God's word points out for us fingerprints of creator and they are there, all over the place.

Others may look at history and see fate or good luck But God's word points out his guiding hand leading to a conclusion he has all planned.

Others may look at our world today and see fearful chaos of wars and one crisis after another

But God's word promises us his protection so we can look at the same things and be at peace.

Old Simeon is looking at death itself coming soon but instead of seeing uncertainty, dark gloom or fear he sees peace, prepared for him by God and promised in his word.

Lutherans sing these words of Simeon after we have received Holy Communion.

Others see in the Lord's supper only bread and wine but we recognize Jesus, his actual body and blood,

all because we have his word that it is there and we believe his promise

and so we, too, leave with newfound peace, because, when we have and believe God's word, like Simeon...

WE BEGIN TO SEE GOD'S SALVATION

for my eyes have seen your salvation

³¹ that you have prepared... for glory to your people Israel."

Hearing the first notes of a song can not only cause you to recognize what is coming but also to remember the past. For example, whenever I hear the Beatle's song "Uncle Albert" I can see myself in the A&W restaurant kitchen

where I worked the summer that song played on the radio over and over and over.

Simeon says he sees the salvation God prepared through ages past for glory to his people Israel.

When God's temple was first built,

God showed his presence there by filling it with a cloud like was seen on Mt. Sinai

This cloud was known as the Shekinah: glory.

It has been a long time since that Shekinah has been seen but Simeon says I see God & his glory in temple again.

What does Simeon see? He sees a little baby boy and the sacrifice required of a poor couple

Although they can only afford two doves,

this sacrifice is counted as good enough

to redeem firstborn son who rightfully belongs to the Lord who saved Israel's firstborn sons from death in the Passover in Egypt.

But here Simeon also sees Jesus, God's own son, who's sacrifice is enough to redeem all of us from slavery to sin and death.

He doesn't get to see him grow up to teach & do miracles.

He doesn't see him die on the cross or rise again.

He sees only this beginning of his keeping all the law for us and still he sees God's whole salvation,

like one standing at on the shore says I see the ocean Because what God has started he is sure to finish.

We sing this song when we have seen

God come in person to his temple again

And we see again the salvation he prepared,

Jesus body that died on the cross for us

and continued presence with us because of resurrection.

This causes us to see our resurrection as well.

Since 4th century this song has been sung at evening prayer, a way of saying, like Simeon I am ready to die in peace, confident I have God's salvation.

We come to this sacrament this evening,

to experienced Christ's presence and so be ready for death

so that when we come to our death
we are ready to experience Christ's presence.
But we recognize that what we see for ourselves here
is also just a beginning.

WE BEGIN TO SHARE GOD'S LIGHT

in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

As soon as we recognize a song, we can start singing.

Then, when others hear it too, they can all join in.

This song of Simeon is meant to be

a sing-along for everyone.

Already Simeon recognizes what Jesus disciples themselves struggled to see even after the resurrection.

This light that causes us to see our savior

and that gives us peace in our dark lives.

is not just for Israel, not just for us, but for all peoples.

The light Simeon somehow sees

is the same light that may already be seen

by Gentile Magi far away, searching the sky.

This is the theme of Epiphany.

The identity and glory of Jesus is revealed and spreads because he is the savior of the whole world.

So we depart in peace, not just ready to go to heaven

but ready to go with this peace to others

who still sit in darkness.

who, because of their anxieties don't see God's peace because of their heartaches don't see God's love because of their busyness don't see God's working because of their distractions don't see God's joy because of their discouragement don't see God's hope.

They need us to share the word we and Simeon have heard, the word of God's promise of salvation,

to share words that say: "See, there it is,

Come along, I'll show you. It is right here all along.

Like Simeon,

WE BEGIN TO SHARE GOD'S LIGHT with all peoples when

WE BEGIN TO SEE GOD'S SALVATION

which is revealed to us when

WE BEGIN BY LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

which promised us forgiveness, grace and eternal peace.