

# "Departing in Peace" Luke 2:25-32

27 December Anno Domini 1994  
The Funeral of Ed Porath

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Emmett, Idaho  
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Now that he now longer is here on this earth, we have only our memories of him. We close our eyes and can almost picture him, can't we? No flashy, fancy clothes, no big, expensive car, no excesses of luxury, no political aspirations. He was an ordinary man, devout in his faith, humble in his attitude. You didn't read about him in the newspapers, but his name was written in the Book of Life. He knew of his salvation -- that it was not something he could bring about. Like each one of us, he was one who had broken God's commandments. So, by God's grace, he had heard the good news of the coming Savior and again, by God's grace, he believed it. Therefore, he looked not to himself for his eternal salvation. Rather, the Lord was his hope; the Lord God was, and is, his future.

We know for certain that he was a righteous man, though we also know that his righteousness was not from himself. Rather, when he was brought into the church through the Word of God, then the Lord's righteousness was given to him as a gift. Forgiveness of all sins, eternal life now and forever, salvation from death, and deliverance from the Evil One are all part of the blessings that God had declared to him. He became an heir of heaven and to him are now all the riches of the LORD God Almighty. He has now come to that inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

As he faced an uncertain death, he might well have agreed with the Apostle Paul as Paul thought about continuing to live in this world of hurt and pain and disappointment and suffering, or to die. He said, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. .... Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*

How many times had he thought of the 23rd Psalm? How often did he recall and rely on the part where the writer speaks, *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me?* How often had he awakened in the night thinking of his life and thinking of the Promise of God which had been given to him? We don't know, do we? For those thoughts and recollections of his are like yours and mine, very personal within our own minds; known only by oneself and by the LORD.

What we do know is that the LORD was with him during his travels through all of the valleys, at his bedside when he had bad dreams, with him when he received news that was less than comforting, and keeping him close even at the moment of his death.

Some may think him an old man, but we don't really know that to be true. There are men who were older and others younger. Age is such a relative thing as well. We recall the saying, "You are only as old as you feel." Like you and me, I'm sure there were days when he felt very old, quite weary, and facing the rest of his life (however long or however short that might have been) only made him more

tired. Days like today and times like last Christmas Eve and Christmas Day make us feel older, quite weary, and very tired.

Dear members of Our Redeemer congregation, neighbors, and relatives of our departed brother in Christ, the members of the family, and especially you, Jean: the only thing that is able to keep us you going during these times is the promise of God given to us in His Son. That promise was given to that man I have been speaking of, the man from the Bible named Simeon, the man who is now with the Lord in heaven, and it sustained him during his entire life, however long or however short that life may have been.

Our sermon text for this funeral is part of the Gospel Reading for the 1st Sunday after Christmas. Please listen to that part of God's Holy Word under the theme:

..... *Depart in Peace.*

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "LORD, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a Light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel.*

That is our text for this day.

In a special revelation given by the Holy Spirit, Simeon had been given the promise of God that he would not die until his eyes beheld the Messiah -- his Lord and Savior. That special day came for Simeon. Mary and Joseph enter the temple with the Christ Child. Simeon is given the wonderful privilege of actually holding Jesus. What the universe could not contain was held in the arms of one man. Here, Simeon, your arms are embracing your Savior, your Salvation, your Redeemer, your Lord. Simeon, in your hands is your eternity.

Dear people, is a baby able to be that and to do that? Well, this is not just any baby being held. This is the Baby -- the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity and the Son of Man, born of the virgin named Mary. This little One will grow up. He will tell you that *He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life ... that no one is able to come to the Father except by Him ... that He has come to lay down His Life for you.*

This Babe of Bethlehem, held in your arms, O Simeon, will grow up for the specific purpose of taking your place and ours upon the cross. He did not look forward to His own death. Unlike you and me, Jesus knew exactly how He was going to die. Jesus knew He would be experiencing hell itself. Why, He even prayed, *My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* He died our death and atoned for our sins. He suffered hell in order that we might not have to. Look, Simeon, He will rise up from His grave for He has defeated death. The tomb could not hold Him; nor will it hold those who fear, love, and trust in Him above all things. He promises to be with us, always, even to the end of the age. So even in going away, He is here with

us. O you righteous and devout man, who holds Life in your arms, He will ascend into heaven to be re-enthroned to His rightful place as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

From there, in Paradise, He awaits you Simeon, He awaits you Ed, He awaits you. The Lord looks down from above and knows that you will not see death, Simeon, until your eyes have seen the Lord's Christ. Now that you have stood in the Temple and beheld Him, Simeon, you may depart in peace. And one day Simeon did depart in peace, according to the Word and will of the Lord.

The Lord looked down from above and knew that Ed would not die, until he had seen Him. And Ed did behold Him. Through the Word of God at his Baptism, Ed beheld the Crucified and Risen Jesus. Now that Ed had received the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit in his Baptism, Ed could have departed in peace as a tiny baby. But that was not the Lord's will. Through the Word of God, Ed peered into the manger bed and beheld the Good News of great joy, for the Savior of the world was born. Now that Ed had seen the Lord, he could have departed in peace after his confirmation day or his wedding day or after the birth of his children. But that was not the Lord's will. None of those times were the right time for Ed.

But when would it be? Not one of us knew until last Tuesday. Of course, God from on high knew when it would be all along, and He knew that last Tuesday was the day for Ed to depart in peace and spend eternity in Paradise. He knew that Ed had terminal, prostate cancer -- a cancer that eats at you for five to ten years. And so God, in His great mercy, love, and pity, permitted an accident to take place in which the only occupant to die was Ed.

Now there were a lot of things about this accident that were not God's will. No doubt you have read about some of them in the newspaper. But this God that Ed trusted did permit all of this to take place. The Lord to Whom Ed stated his belief allowed that accident to happen. The Heavenly Father to Whom Ed confessed his allegiance, is the same Heavenly Father Who permitted some lawbreakers to take His Only Son captive, convict Him falsely, and crucify Him. So, if you've got a problem with Ed's death, you probably have a problem with Jesus' death. And, if you've got a problem with Jesus' death, then you've got a problem with God.

For Ed, there are now, no hurts, no pain, no sorrow, no tears, no suffering for him. He has departed in peace according to the Word of God. The promise had been given and Ed believed and trusted in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Last Tuesday all things were ready in heaven and on earth for Ed to depart in peace. Last Tuesday Jesus was getting ready to celebrate another birthday. Our Lord was having a party and Ed was invited. So, he departed in peace.

From there in Paradise, the Father awaits you, Jesus awaits you, the Holy Spirit awaits you, Simeon awaits you, and now Ed awaits you. The promise is good whether you believe it or not. The heavenly riches are there whether you believe it or not. Jesus died for you whether you believe it or not.

For those who do believe in Him, trust Him, and follow Him, well you may depart in peace because your eyes have beheld Him. Oh, it's not that Christians look forward to dying. Christians do not especially want to die anymore than anyone else. I know I don't. But a very wise Christian woman, one whom I admire very much, told me something like this: "It is not the dying that bothers me, it is the struggle to keep on living that is so hard." So from God's point of view, the view that both

Simeon and Ed now have, any day is a good day to die, even five days before Christmas. Why, even Christmas Day is a good day to go to heaven. The Christian may, indeed, depart in peace.

For those who never knew Him, or who no longer believe in Him, or who have wandered away from Him, well, there really is no good day to die. Because on that day Jesus will say to them, *Depart .... depart from Me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. .... He who believes in Him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of the only Son of God.*

Isaiah the Prophet gives good counsel when he writes: *Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.* The Apostle Paul encourages the same when he writes: *Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

According to God's Word, Ed believed and was baptized. With the Word, Ed lived his life of faith in the Church. Through the Word of God, Ed received Christ at Holy Communion. He received the very Body of Jesus born of Mary -- the very Blood of Jesus shed on the cross. And for a thousand times and more, after the Lord's Supper, he sang the ancient liturgy of the church. He sang the song of Simeon ...

*... 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. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*