

**THE SONGS OF ADVENT**  
**Midweek Advent Sermon December 1, 2004**

**St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Watertown, WI**

**CHRISTMAS MAKES US READY TO DIE! LUKE 2:29-32**

This is a time of year when we hear lots of music. You turn on your radio and you hear the familiar Christmas carols. You walk into any mall or store and you hear Silent Night, Jingle Bells and the tunes seem to be endless. It's a time when people get together and they sing. Most people love to sing at this time of the year. It's a time for celebration and joy. This year during our midweek Advent devotions we will focus on three songs of Advent. They are songs sung by three different people. There is the song of Zechariah, which he sang at the birth of his son, John the Baptist. There is the song of Mary, which she sang to her cousin Elizabeth when she went to visit her after having been told by the angel Gabriel that she would be the mother of the Savior of the world. And there is the song of Simeon which he sang after he had seen the infant Jesus when Jesus was 40 days old at the temple in Jerusalem. Today we would like to focus our attention on the third song of Advent, the song of Simeon. These are words that are very familiar to many of us. They are words that we often sing at the close of our communion services, "Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel." (Song of Simeon – Christian Worship p. 24)

On the Saturday evening after Thanksgiving as I was walking my dog, one of my neighbors said to me, "Well, Jim are you ready for Christmas?" I quickly responded, "Sure, of course." He sort of laughed and said, "Yeh." His question got me to thinking. What makes us ready? Is it buying gifts for all the people on my list? Is it decorating the house and getting all the special candies and treats baked and prepared? What makes a person ready? It's nothing that I do. It's what God has done that makes us ready and prepared to celebrate Christmas and not just to celebrate the birthday of our Savior, but also to be ready for anything that may come my way and even my own death. As we examine the song sung by a man named Simeon at the temple in Jerusalem forty days after the birth of Jesus, I would like you to focus with me on this thought –

**CHRISTMAS MAKES US READY TO DIE!** Death is a rather heavy subject to be discussing during this time of celebrating someone's birthday. I have often heard people say that one of the worst times of the year to lose a loved one is Christmas because every Christmas you will be reminded of the death of your loved one. But the reality is that we will all one day die, if Jesus doesn't return first and we need to be prepared and ready for that day. Let's each of us ask that question – **I) Am I Ready To Die?** As we watch and listen to the words of Simeon we learn that **II) As Disciples Of The Babe Of Bethlehem We Are Always Ready To Die.**

## ARE YOU READY TO DIE?

Recently I was talking to someone about death and she said to me, "I'm not so sure that I'm ready for death." I asked what she meant. She said, "Well, there are still many things that I want to do and enjoy in this world before I leave it." We hear people say, "Well, I would like to see my children grow up" or "I want to see my grandchildren." It is so easy to become attached to this world and think this is where it's at. We often think of death as something that happens to old people. Now what is old? When you're in your teens, your parents who may be in their 40's or 50's are old. When you're in your 40' and 50's your parents in their 70's or 80's are old. When you're in your 70's or 80's then someone in their 90's or over 100 is old. Age is relative. If you read the obituary column in any newspaper you will note that people die at all ages. It isn't just people in their 70's, 80's or 90's who pass away. Infants die. People in their teens and 20's also die.

Death is not a respecter of age. Any of us could die at any time. Why? Death is the consequence of being imperfect. If you and I were perfect, we would never die. But the reality is that every one of us is imperfect. We have been sinful from the moment of our conception. Just ask any parent how much time and effort they have spent in teaching their children how to be selfish. They haven't. That is how their children entered this world. That is how all of us came into this world. Because of that we are all destined to die. Our souls are going to separate from our bodies. When? Only God knows? How? God knows that too. Since this is a reality that everyone has to deal with in our life, are you ready to die?

The man who sang the song before us today, was ready to die? Why? Because he was old? We don't know if he was an old man, the Bible doesn't tell us that. He may have been a man in his 30's or 40's. However, we are told that the Spirit of God had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ, the Messiah that God had promised to his people throughout the Old Testament. Simeon was led by the Spirit of God to go to the temple on this particular day. And who should show up in the long line of couples coming for purification after childbirth. A young couple from Nazareth who were at this time living in Bethlehem. They had come to Jerusalem to do what the law had required. There were two laws that Mary and Joseph were following. The first was to consecrate their son. According to the Word of the Lord, ever first-born son belonged be to the Lord and could be redeemed by the parents paying five shekels. Mary and Joseph did not redeem their son, as he was consecrated for greater service to the Lord. The other law that they were fulfilling was that 40 days after the birth of a child the mother had to go through purification rites and offer a sacrifice to the Lord, which Mary and Joseph did. The Spirit led Simeon up to this couple and he took the child Jesus from the arms of his parents and said, "I am now ready to die because I have seen the Lord's salvation." Simeon was now ready to face his God and Maker because he had held in his arms the promised rescuer that God has promised in Eden to Adam and Eve, the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. He was holding the one

whom God had promised to Abraham would be a blessing for all the people of the world. He saw with his eyes the son of David who would establish an everlasting kingdom.

### **AS DISCIPLES OF THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM WE ARE ALWAYS READY**

Simeon by the power of the Spirit of God knew who this child was. He now could die in peace. For this child was the Prince of Peace who would establish peace between God and the human race. All Simeon saw was a helpless baby 40 days old and yet he trusted God's promise that this child would do for him what Simeon knew he could not do for himself. This child would establish a proper relationship between God and people.

You and I know much more about the Babe of Bethlehem. We have the privilege of knowing all that Jesus did for us. We know that he lived a perfect and righteous life in our place. We know that he really did take our sins upon himself and suffer the hell we deserve for our sins. We know that he conquered our final enemy death by rising from the grave and now living forever body and soul intact. We know that through him we have pardon and eternal life.

Our eyes have seen much more than Simeon saw. We saw Jesus complete his assignment and get an A+ on his project. Just as the Spirit led Simeon to Jesus in that crowd of people in Jerusalem, so the Holy Spirit has led you and me to the Babe of Bethlehem also. Through the power of God's Word we have come to trust and follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Are you ready to die? Of course we are. We are ready because Jesus has made all things ready for us. Jesus has suffered the hell we should get for our sins. Jesus has removed the sting of death for us. Our physical death is now our simply walking out of this life and into eternal life with God in glory.

Christmas makes us ready to die. If Jesus had not come, we would not have a Savior and without a Savior there is no peace, no hope, no eternal life, no forgiveness and pardon. However, with Jesus we have forgiveness, peace and eternal life. Because of Jesus we are ready to die, whenever, wherever and however God may determine it. For we are God's children and we are citizens of his heavenly kingdom. We have the same faith and hope that Simeon had and we can say with Simeon. "Lord now let your servant depart in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel. Amen.