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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 3, 2016
2nd Sunday after Christmas

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 52:7-10

Hymns: 95; 108; 96; 97 (105:1,2,8)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 2:22-32

22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,

According to Your word;

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation

31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, God incarnate,
dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: A Baby really changes one's life

Those of us who are blessed to be parents can probably remember the moment we first held our child in our arms, and the impression that made on us. It was a moment of joy and also a moment of realization for suddenly we were responsible for the care and raising of this young precious child. My wife won't let me forget the silly grin that spread across my face, even as my heart was filled with love for my child. Yes, a baby changes everything. If that is true of our children, it is all the more true for the Baby born to Mary.

There is a Christmas song on one of my CD's at home, and I remember how that carol drew me in when I first heard it because began with giving the account of how a young girl was pregnant and having a baby under poor circumstances. The song talks about how that young girl's life would be changed because “a baby changes everything.” It wasn't until late in the song that it became

apparent that the Baby that was the subject of this song wasn't just any baby, even as the young mother wasn't just any young teenage mother. This was about Jesus born of the Virgin Mary, and so one does indeed comprehend the change this Baby brought into the world.

The Holy Spirit would lead us to understand --

THEME: The Difference this Baby Makes.

Of course this Baby, the Babe of Bethlehem made a much larger difference in the world than any other baby. Jesus, beginning in His infancy brought --

I. A Complete and Perfect Righteousness.

As we read this we might think of the actions described in our text as being attributed to Joseph and Mary, for Jesus surely wasn't able to make His own way from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to visit the temple. Also it was Joseph who, being a poor working man, presented the minimal redemption price for this first born Son.

Luke 2:22-24 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

We need to recognize that God was directing the events of that day through the agency of Mary and Joseph. God, in the person of Jesus, "was born under the law that He might redeem those who were under the law" (Galatians

4:4-5). Being under the law Jesus fulfilled all righteousness from the very opening days of His life. Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day of His life. It was then that Joseph called His name Jesus as he had been directed by the angel.

A perfect righteousness doesn't begin when a person has reached the age of discretion, or accountability, whatever man may determine that to be. Righteousness must begin with sinlessness at birth, which only Jesus possessed. Having been conceived of the Holy Spirit Jesus did not inherit the sin the rest of mankind inherited ever since Adam. However, that needed to be followed up with a fulfillment of the law in its every demand. That began in those opening days of Jesus' life, and included this trip to the temple with Jesus in Mary's arms that they might do that which the law prescribed.

What a difference a Baby makes. Indeed this Baby changes everything. He secured a perfect righteousness for us that we might have confidence in this righteousness which comes to us from God, that we might have life in His name.

This Baby, this Child of Mary made a big difference in the lives of all who believe. We see how this Holy Child brought to Simeon a --

II. A Whole Life of Hope and Faith.

Luke 2:25-30 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 So he came by the

Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation.”

The Holy Spirit had given Simeon a measure of revelation that is not commonly given, indeed which we have no right to expect. In this regard Simeon was a prophet, even as his words on this occasion bear out. And so it was that the Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Most people assume that this indicates that Simeon was an old man. That may be so. It may not be so as well. In the verses following our text the Spirit tells us about another devout individual who was in the temple that day, and the Spirit is quite explicit about Anna’s age. Why would the Spirit not reveal more specifics about Simeon’s age? The answer is because the Spirit’s message wasn’t about Simeon’s age, it was about his faith and the impact of that Baby which he took up into his arms that day.

Having seen the Lord’s Christ, having held the Christ-child in his arms, Simeon’s life was complete! He had seen the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise. He had seen the salvation the Lord prepared for this world. That made his life complete no matter what his age. He was ready to depart this world and be with the Lord. He was truly ready, and he actually knew a full and complete life. That may not be the terms the world would use to describe a full life, but that is what the Spirit reveals for us that we might comprehend what it means to have a full life, a life made complete through faith in Christ Jesus, the Child of

Mary! This Baby changes things for our eternal good and blessing.

What a difference this Baby makes in our hearts and lives! In Him we also have a full and complete life. In Him we are fully prepared to depart this life. Through faith in Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem we have seen the salvation which the Lord has prepared for this world, the salvation which opens for us the door to Paradise.

Whether we are young, middle aged, or seniors we find our lives full and complete because of what the Spirit has brought to us, in our hearts, through faith in Christ Jesus. Forget about the world's definition of a full and complete life; we are complete in Jesus.

Because of this we share the hope and peace of Simeon. We comprehend the Spirit's message of --

III. A Salvation that Extends to All the People.

Luke 2:30-32 “For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.”

These words of testimony from Simeon's mouth began with the God the Holy Spirit. This is an inspired and recorded gospel message intended for us and for our salvation. It expresses an important truth concerning the scope of God's desire and plan of salvation, something we shall explore more fully next Sunday on Epiphany Sunday. Today we focus on the impact that this Baby makes in your heart and life. God has prepared this salvation before the face of all people. He didn't hide it in a closet. He didn't reveal it to this one devout believer, or

even to a very special few individuals. He has prepared this salvation before the world, so that all the world might know of what God has done in Christ Jesus; that all the world might learn of this righteousness which overwhelms our sin, our guilt, and overturns our condemnation. Yes indeed, a Baby changes everything.

This Baby has secured a righteousness for us which brings us peace with God, eternal peace that is not overturned by our frequent lapses into sin. Jesus is the light that casts out the shadow of sin and death from our hearts. Jesus has shone in our hearts with the light of the glory of God. This light does not consume us, but rather dispels the darkness of our natural hearts. Now we know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

What a difference a Baby makes. We have been brought out of darkness to light. Our lives have been made full and complete so that we all, young or old, are ready, fully ready to depart this life in peace. This is true because this Baby did for us what we could not do for ourselves; He secured that complete and perfect righteousness which God brings to each of us through faith in Jesus the Child of Mary. What a difference this Baby has made!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.