

For obvious reasons, death has taken the forefront of our cultural dialog. Since Aug 22 we have witnessed the shooting at Annunciation Catholic School, the stabbing of Iryna Zarutka on a tram in Charolette, NC and now the assassination of Charlie Kirk. At the same time, we have witnessed the Federal Government taking over law enforcement in Washington, DC, because of violent crime. This has led to questions about things like violence, political violence and transgenderism.

But there is also the question of death. How are we to face death? One good thing that I have heard following the shooting of Charlie Kirk is that some have pointed to his faith in Christ and the promise of eternal life that Charlie held to.

All of this talk about death should also make us ask ourselves: “Am I ready to die?” What will it take for you to be ready to die? Now, obviously, no-one wants to die. But what is it that will really make you ready to die?

Many put it in terms of having a bucket list, a list of things we want to do before we die. The problem is that we tend to be selfish, thinking about what we want to do or accomplish. As human beings we tend to want to do our own things and go our own ways. As a result, the most important aspect to the question “are you ready to die?” is not what we want to do first; rather it is, “are you ready for what comes after your death?”

In Heb. 9:27 we are told “it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.” As much as people tend to fear death, the real issue is what comes after death. If you face death, at any age or stage of life, with guilt before God, you are in trouble! To go to the judgment with guilt before God will lead to eternal damnation!

It doesn't matter how “big” or “small” our guilt is. God expects, God demands perfection. The reason is that any sin is a rebellion against Him. Anything you do wrong is, in essence, saying to God: “I don't want to follow your ways.” It's really a declaration that we think we know better than God what's right. This means that any and all guilt condemns us.

Therefore, if we are going to be ready to face death, and the judgment, we need grace. To truly be ready to die, we need the assurance that God loves and forgives us. We need to know that we are not going to face God's eternal wrath, but can have the promise of His mercy.

In Luke 2, we meet a man named Simeon. We are told he was “Righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.” In other words, he was waiting for God to bring the promised salvation. Simeon was even given a unique promise from God, for “it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.”

So, Simeon waited for the One who would bring salvation. We don't know how long, but he waited. Then, when Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the Temple, God's promise to Simeon was fulfilled.

When he finally saw and held Jesus, Simeon, filled with joy praised God saying: “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

Simeon was declaring that He could die in peace, for by depart he meant to leave this life. He could die in peace, because he saw the savior. Simeon could die in peace, for he had held in his hands the One who would die to redeem all people.

We also know that the infant, Jesus, would grow up to suffer and die on the cross and rise again on the third day. He would do this to take away the wall that divides sinful human beings from God. Jesus took our guilt away from us, so we can now live in God’s presence forever.

Jesus even takes away the barriers between people. As Simeon notes that Jesus is “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” Therefore, the promise of Jesus’ forgiveness is for all people of all colors, cultures and nations. All who receive Christ receive His love and grace. Here and here alone do we find the path forward to unity in our terribly fractured world!

What a wonderful experience for Simeon! Imagine, seeing Jesus with your own eyes! What joy to hold Him close.

Dear friends, this is what we also get to do in the Lord’s Supper. When Jesus comes to us here, He comes in His very body and blood. He comes in the bread and the wine. While they still look like, taste like, and in fact are bread and wine, they are more than that. There we also receive the very body and blood of Jesus.

When you look at that wafer of bread, Jesus is really there!

When you look at that chalice of wine, Jesus is really there!

So, you too get a chance to see Jesus in His body and blood! You too get to hold Him close, even closer than Simeon, as He comes into you! And because of this, you receive the salvation Jesus came to bring.

Therefore, you, along with Simeon can in fact die in peace! This is the reason we sing Simeon’s song, known as the *Nunc Dimittis*, after the Lord’s

Supper. As you might guess, *Nunc Dimittis* are just the first words of it in Latin, meaning “Let us now depart.”

When we sing this, we need to remember Simeon’s situation. He wasn’t talking about departing the Temple to go home, he was talking about departing from this life. He could die in peace.

We leave church quite ready to die in peace. We are ready to die in peace with God, because we too have beheld Jesus.

Think of the words of the *Nunc Dimittis*: “O Lord, now let Your servant Depart in heavenly peace, for I have seen the glory of your redeeming grace: a light to lead the Gentiles unto Your holy hill, the glory of Your people, Your chosen Israel.”

We can depart from here and be ready to die in peace, because of the promises of God’s Word. We have seen His salvation!

We then follow Simeon’s song with a doxology, a praise of the Triune God. Some people bow during part of this, honoring the name of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Bowing is optional. But as we sing, we honor and praise God for His grace that He gives to us, even in the Sacrament. We close this by praising God, Father Son and Holy Spirit for His grace and mercy.

But, if the Sacrament is about our receiving Jesus, and Simeon first sang this when he held the infant Jesus, why do we sing a doxology to the three persons of the Trinity? The reason is that our salvation, like all things, is done by the whole of God. In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter describes our salvation in this way: it is “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.” This is why we

immediately go from one person of the Trinity to the whole of the Godhead; because all three Persons are working for our salvation.

So, are you ready to die? If you have held and seen Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine, then you are.

Now that you have received Christ, you can depart in peace. You can leave this building to go back to life, knowing that you have peace with God. But even more than that, you can leave this life, knowing that because of God’s salvation in Christ, you are forgiven and have God’s love now and for all eternity. There is no reason for us to fear death. We have beheld and received God’s long-promised salvation.

Depart in peace.