

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
December 31, 2017

## My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation

Luke 2:25-32

2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

2:26 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.

2:27 And he came in 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,

2:28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

2:29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

2:30 for my eyes have seen your salvation

2:31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

2:32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

### **1. The Salvation that Was Shown**

The story of Jesus' birth has four parts; "The Annunciation," "The Visitation," "The Nativity," and "The Presentation." When we say "presentation," it implies the showcase of new products, or research progress; but in this case it means that Jesus was offered to God. One time I got the resume of a Christian retreat, and the location was named "Presentation Center." I thought, "It sounds kind of modern." After I got there, it was deep inside of the mountain and had an old

chapel. It was totally different from what I thought about and at the time, I knew the “Presentation Center” was originated in today’s verse.

According to the Law of the Old Testament, the first-born son is God’s property and to be offered. It was originated in the Exodus. At the time of Exodus, Israel escaped from Egypt because of the bale that all of the first-born sons in Egypt met death, while Israel didn’t; since God prepared the lambs of Passover. God “redeemed” the first-born son of Israel, counting them as His property. Israel’s first-born were “presented,” means “offered,” because they were God’s property.

People actually substituted animals for “Offering children – Presentation” and Mary and Joseph were ruled to offer a pair of doves or baby doves. This rule was for the poor, whose money was not enough to purchase the animals of sacrifice. We could see in such poorness Jesus was born.

However, Jesus is the Redeemer. Contrary to the fact that Jesus was offered “to-be-redeemed” following the Law of Israel, Jesus is actually the Redeemer. We, in fact, can see God’s plan of salvation that the Redeemer sacrifices Himself as the Lamb of God. After Jesus reached adulthood and taught people, He sacrificed Himself on the cross to save the people. Nevertheless Jesus was the first-born of God, He was offered and His blood was shed on the alter of the cross.

So Apostle John said in 1 John 4:10, pointing the cross, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” The love of God was shaped in the cross as the real “Presentation,” and the Lord’s Supper, I would say, is the Re-presentation of the cross because we remember the cross of

Jesus Christ at the time. It has done only one time that Jesus was crucified on the cross, but His cross is “re-presented” by the Lord’s Supper where the people remembering Him through repentance and faith. They will see the cross of salvation at the Lord’s Supper.

Apostle Paul says in Galatians 3:10 said, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.” How and when was Jesus Christ “portrayed” as crucified? I suppose it was in the Lord’s Supper, in addition to Paul’s preaching. The words of Galatians by Paul suggest the experience of the first century Christians, I think.

Mary and Joseph offered a pair of doves for their child Jesus; but God offered for us His one and only Son. The presentation of the baby Jesus was for God from people, and at the same time for people from God’s unlimited love that asks nothing in return.

## **2. The Salvation That Was Seen**

Simeon met baby Jesus at the Temple, he took him in his arm and praised God, saying “Today, my eyes have seen your salvation”. Why was Simeon able to tell that child Jesus was a Savior, when he had never seen him before? Did child Jesus look different from other toddlers?

When my daughter was small, she asked me in a serious look, saying “Father, baby’s face is usually red, isn’t it?” I answered, “Yes, that’s why we call it a baby (in Japanese, we say *aka-chan*: a red child). She was puzzled and said, “but Jesus was green when he was born, right?” I was puzzled, too. “Because the Bible said “You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” In the

Colloquial Japanese Bible, the baby was called “*aka-chan*” but in the New Japanese Bible, it was called “*midorigo*.” (literally ‘green child’) My daughter read this word and imagined that the baby Jesus had a greenish skin color. I explained to her that “*midorigo*” meant a just-born baby. The word “*midorigo*” is used in only poetic sentences, but we usually don’t use it in our daily conversation, so some adults may misunderstand this word as well.

Baby Jesus did not look different from ordinary babies. But Simeon knew at a glance that this child was the Savior. Because as the Bible said “the Holy Spirit was on him”. It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. The encounter to the child Jesus took place when Simeon went into the temple courts, moved by the Spirit.

As 1 Corinthians 12:3 says “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit,” it is the Holy Spirit who brings humans to Christ, but there are requirements on humans’ side for them to receive the guidance from the Holy Spirit. It is as written about Simeon “who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel”, to live in the righteous relationship with God and believe in the accomplishment of the God’s word and to wait in hope.

As far as we live in this world, we cannot be perfect in everything, such as making no mistakes or failures, and committing no sins. Even very religious person could not make a perfect one. But true believers, even they make sins or fail, they repent every time and ask for forgiveness and cleansing. They always think about the relationship with God and make it correct accordingly. The righteous relationship with God is not to become a great person so that he/she will not need

Him, but it resides in the life in which we trust in His grace and ask for forgiveness and cleansing, knowing that we cannot live without His love and compassion.

Simeon must have been a person of integrity and great believer. But he was not proud of himself or he did not look down on people. He was waiting for the consolation of the people and praying for it. Because his spirit was connected to God and his eyes were gazed into the promise of God, the Holy Spirit made him meet the Savior and showed him the salvation in baby Jesus.

In the story of the Nativity, the words “find” and “see” are frequently used. In Luke 2:12-17, the angels told shepherds, “And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger..... When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” .... And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.” When Simeon said “for my eyes have seen your salvation” and the shepherds “saw it”, the word “to know” was used for “to see” in the original language. In Greek, there are two words for “to know”: one is “to know as obtained knowledge” and the other is “to know by seeing and experiencing.” The word used for Simeon and shepherds is the latter one.

To know the Savior is not by studying and obtaining the knowledge about him. The shepherds and Simeon actually saw the Savior by their eyes and heard Him by their ears and touched Him by their hands.

They saw “salvation” that became a human. We also want to “see” the Savior Jesus Christ and “know” him. As Simeon made a lifetime goal of “seeing the salvation”, we would also like to make it as a goal for our faith.

### **3. The Salvation that Is Working Now**

The Canticle of Simeon has been called “*Nunc Dimittis*” from the Latin translation of the verse. Simeon was revealed that he would not see death before he had seen the Savior, and he finally saw the Savior whom he had been waiting through his long life. His words, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word,” showed his joy that he saw the fulfillment of the promise of God.

The Canticle of Simeon became a word of prayer that people said at the end of the day. The ancient faithful believers lived the day as if it were their last. They prayed after the work and before sleep of the day, saying, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word.” No one can say that we can awake next morning. Because no one knows what will happen in our body and our world. The believers find, know the salvation, and sleep with the confidence of the salvation in order that we won’t regret in case of our death. “Today, my eyes have seen your salvation.” If we can say this humbly with confidence, we can sleep in perfect peace through the night.

I want to appeal to all of you. Please don’t sleep without saying, “Today, my eyes have seen your salvation” with Simeon. Don’t live another day without the salvation. “Today” and “now,” believe and

accept the salvation of Jesus Christ and experience it. Return to the right relationship with Jesus Christ, and live in the relationship.

The Canticle of Simenon, "*Nunc Dimittis*," became a congregational song that was sung at the end the worship service. When we pray, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word" at the night before sleep, we say to the Lord, "Lord, I trust in you, though I have to leave the world tonight." But, when we sing it at the end of the worship service, we say, "Lord, you sent me in your peace to the world. Help me to talk the salvation that I saw and knew at this worship service.

It's very meaningful to sing the Canticle of Simeon after the Lord's Supper because our eyes see the salvation of Jesus Christ at the Lord's Supper. Our ears listen to the salvation through the preaching, but our eyes see the salvation of Jesus Christ, our hands touch it, and our tongues taste it. And we receive the salvation as the fresh works of God for us who live now and here. The salvation of God does not stay in two thousand years ago. We ourselves and our circumstances change moment by moment. We are not the same persons when we celebrate the Lord's Supper in the last month. We need not the one month old grace but the fresh grace to live the coming days. It was wonderful grace that we first knew Jesus Christ. However we cannot live now and tomorrow only by the some decades old grace. We need to find the salvation of Christ again and take a new step by the grace.

Don't spend the hour of the worship service. Don't make the Lord's Supper an empty ceremony. Please find and see the salvation of Christ here and now. Please have the confidence of the salvation and take a step for the tomorrow and the days of the next year.

## **(Prayer)**

Dear Heavenly Father, you sent your Son as a man to the world so that we could see your salvation. The Son Jesus Christ returned heaven after finishing his salvation works. But he never has gone to the place where we cannot reach. He still shows himself through the bread and wine when we listen to his words, saying, “This is my body.” and “This is my blood.” Please lead us to the faith which we can say, “Today, my eyes have seen your salvation” with Simeon. I pray this in the name of Lord Jesus.