



St John Lutheran Church

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Text: Luke 2: 29-31.

Funeral Sermon for Eve Oldham

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! **Today's sermon is** based upon the Gospel of St. Luke chapter 2, particularly the twenty-ninth through the thirtieth verses. **"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 sight of all people"** (Luke 2:29-31).

Dear Christian friends: It is certainly strange how God works. **Think about the** Gospel you just heard, and realize from it that God's thoughts are not our thoughts... **and His** ways are not our ways. **God says as** much through the prophet Isaiah: **"My thoughts are not your thoughts," He says, "neither are your ways My ways"** (Isaiah 55:8), and this is exactly what we see in this Gospel from Luke chapter 2. **Two thousand years** ago, a divine and holy miracle took place. **A baby was born. God sent His Son** into the world, exiling Him to dwell "among us," a light shining "in the darkness" (John 1:5).

But the darkness could not comprehend this newborn light (John 1:5), this Creator, Who comes into His creation. **"He was in** the world... **and** the world knew Him not. **He came unto** His own and His own received Him not" (John 19-10). **But this is** what is so strange about the way God works. **We would expect** Him to come in power and in might. **We would expect** Him to enter into His temple... **His dwelling** place on earth... **with great** pomp and ceremony... **while scores** of angels surround the wonderment of Jerusalem.

But His coming to earth is noticed by only a few people...**some** shepherds... **none of** whom could have missed the point... **so clear** was the preaching of the angels. **Then, His coming** to the Temple is noticed by only a few people...**St. Anna** the prophetess... **and our** aged St. Simeon. **It seems shocking** that only a handful of people stood in the place where there should have been thousands of expectant and rejoicing witnesses. **But there is no** cloud of witnesses. **There is no** pomp and no fanfare. **No one but** Simeon... **and later... Anna... they were** there in the temple to see the great thing that the Lord had done.

Yet this is how your loving and gracious God works. **"Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him"** (Luke 2:25). **Simeon was waiting** for the consolation of Israel... **that is,** he had been given the gift of faith. **He had been** given the knowledge, the assurance, **and the confidence** of eternal salvation. **This gift had** been given to him by the indwelling power of God the Holy Spirit. **By the blessing** of God... **this man's** eyes had been opened. **By the miracle** of God, Simeon's unbelieving, stony heart had been converted to a heart of flesh and a heart of faith. **It was by** faith that Simeon lived... **and by** faith that he entered into the temple courts at the Spirit's bidding. **There, God allowed** him to see his salvation... **the baby** Jesus, carried in his mother's arms.

What more could Simeon do? **His heart wells** up with a song of thanks and cannot help but be opened to sing praise: **"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 sight of all people"** (Luke 2:29-31). **Simeon remained faithful** to death... **and by** the Promise of God he received the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). **I simply don't**

think there is another piece of Scripture that fits the life of our Eve than this one of Simeon and Anna...**those faithful** believers who waited on the Lord's Promise...**the Promise** that they say in the flesh!

It is certainly strange how God works. **Think about this** body lying here... **and realize** from it that God's thoughts are not our thoughts... **and His** ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8). **Some seventy-six or so years** ago, a divine and holy miracle occurred. **A baby named** Eve was baptized in a little town known as Squirrel Idaho. **This baptism is** the miracle of God! **This is an** act of divine mercy... **where God** takes a little child...**a child** born in death and in sin...**and God** gives the child new life. **This baptism marks** the arrival of God into His temple...**but a** much more precious and dear temple than that old building in Jerusalem. **As St. Paul** says, "**Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God?**" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Seventy-six years ago, a child of darkness, a baby...**a child** of exile was touched by God... **and in** that miraculous act of water and Word the child is named Eva Marie... **now a** holy, blood-bought, redeemed child of God. **Isn't it shocking** that only a handful of people stood in the place where there should have been thousands of expectant and rejoicing witnesses? **But it is** strange how God works. **This occasion, too,** is marked by only a few people...**the** pastor who baptized Eve, her mother and father, and perhaps the rest of her immediate family. **There is no** pomp, no great ceremony, and no fanfare. **Only a few** were there to see the great thing that the Lord had done. **Already in that** act, God began working out the promise that was later spoken at Eve's confirmation at St. John in 1944, when she became a communicant member the Lutheran Church in Milton-Freewater Oregon.

You see, Dear Christians... **like Simeon** and like Anna of old... **this woman** named Eve had been given the gift of faith. **She had been** given the knowledge... **the assurance,** and the confidence of eternal salvation. **This gift had** been given to her by the indwelling power of God the Holy Spirit. **Granted, the Holy Spirit** spoke to Eve in a way different than He spoke to Simeon. **Simeon heard directly** from God. **Eve had the** written Word of God read to her, taught to her, and placed in her hands. **But it was and is the very same Word of God!!**

But the gift given to Eve is so very much like the gift given to Simeon. **By the blessing** of God, this woman's eyes had also been opened. **By the miracle** of God, her unbelieving, stony heart had been converted to a heart of flesh and a heart of faith. **It was by** faith that Eve lived, and by faith she carried out her labors all the days of her life. **She did this** with a quiet and sure confidence that she carried with her everywhere. **This is the** reason we are here today... **rejoicing that** God has allowed Eve to see His salvation... **and in** that salvation to depart in His Peace. **Ours is the** blessed realization Eve Oldham now lives with her crucified and living Lord Jesus in the comfort of eternal life. **As I knew** Eve, I can tell you that such was her confidence and comfort, absolutely... **and so** it is also ours today.

It certainly is strange how God works. **Every person here** knows that Eve was in poor health for a some time. **Death certainly could** have come easily for Eve within the last several months...**and in** fact she was very near death in the hospital last year. **Yet God's thoughts** are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways. **He in His** mercy saw fit to keep Eve here on this earth until last week. **Please understand the** sweet, poignant blessing of being allowed to live a long life of certain faith... **and then** to pass on to God's Kingdom with confidence and hope!

Every year we mark the coming of God to this earth at Christmas with this text from Luke. **We rejoice that** God would choose not to destroy us... **but that** He would deign **to be with us** and to save us. **We realized again** that God had come to earth to pierce the darkness of our sins and to shine the light of His Grace upon us in His Son Jesus Christ. **Jesus condescends and** comes to earth... **and He** does so that this... **His faithful** servant lying here today... **might ascend** and enter into heaven with Him. **The birth we** celebrate every year allowed Eve to live Simeon's words: "**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 sight of all people'
(Luke 2:29-31).

As it was my profound privilege to be Eve's pastor for the past 12 years...**I thought** a lot about the text from Scripture that I would use at her funeral. **It is a** very wonderful... **and yet** humbling experience to watch our Lord work such a great faith in a person the way He did with Eve. **Eve's faith seemed** boundless...**her way** of living her faith was so great...**the Life** of her Lord shined through her every single day she walked among us. **All of you** are here this day because this wonderful woman touched you in a very personal and meaningful way...**ways that** you perhaps can't really explain...**yet she** did touch you...**move you. I know she did me. I watcher her** faith grow and work and flower...**and I** marveled at the work the Lord did in Eve. **Every single time** I would give her communion she would smile and say "**I love my God! or...I love my Lord!**"

This past few years has been tough on Eve and her family as her health failed. **Yet through all** of that was that quiet smile ... **almost bashful** smile that Eve had...**she never** wondered why this was happening to her. **She most certainly** never complained about what was happening to her. She simply, quietly and yet **very...very** profoundly lived the life of faith with great joy. **That was the thing...even in** all she endured... **there was** that ever present joy ...**which was** irrepressible...**undeniable...simple... quiet... and above all...certain! It was all this because of the faith that God gave Eve...and she knew and trusted ...and took great joy in knowing ...that when her body would finally give out ...she would say the very same words that Simeon spoke..."Lord now let you servant go in peace...for mine eyes have seen your salvation!"**

God spoke this promise to Eve in her baptism and He kindled and stoked the fire of her faith all of her life...**this** because God loves Eve. **Eve was faithful** unto death because God made Eve a faithful one. **Faithful, to attend St. John** all these many years...**faithful** to see her family all raised in the faith. **Eve knew that** the One **who** speaks the promise **is the One** who keeps the promise... **and indeed... He is** the One who has fulfilled His promise to our departed sister... **who** in Jesus' Name has been given the crown of life. **Eve has run** her race and she has indeed departed in her Lord's Peace where she now rests in His Almighty and Holy presence. **Weep not for** Eve... **for her** faith is now a reality...**and she** is now wearing that wonderful bashful smile....In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit... Amen.

Rev. Eric M. Christiansen
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