

Introductory

This material is exclusive to Luke. Luke 2:33-40 was the reading appointed for the Sunday after Christmas in TLH. That reading leaves out the actual presentation at the Temple and the Song of Simeon, but it includes the “marveling” of Mary and Joseph. It also includes the story of Anna the Prophetess, which I never ever heard preached on.

In LW, Luke 2:25-40 is appointed to be read on The First Sunday after Christmas, series B. That reading omits the talk about the OT roots of these rites. Luke 2:41-52, the boy Jesus in the Temple is appointed to be read for series C. LSB has this text for Christmas 1 in the C series as well as for the B series. The Boy is on Christmas 2 every year.

This is the time of the year when we strengthen our people’s understanding of the chronology of the early life of Jesus. They well know about His birth, and this is chronologically the next event in His life talked about in the Bible. I would think it appropriate to speak in general terms about the first few weeks of life with The Baby.

There are certain things about having the first child that are universal and timeless; Jesus ate and produced dirty diapers, et al. He probably didn’t sleep through the night at first, but maybe He did. The only thing different about Jesus was that He was God, and He was perfect and sinless. We should not make too much of those things, nor too little.

Did Jesus cry? Crying is depicted in the Bible as a thing found in hell. Heaven is said to be a place lacking crying. Maybe Jesus didn’t cry. Maybe He did. Is there anything inherently sinful about crying? That’s about as deeply into the theology of crying as I care to get, and it’s one of those thing – if it were important, they would have told us.

The ceremony being related here by Luke is generally known as The Rite of Purification of the First Born. There are several such purification rites, called “Mikvah,” associated with OT Judaism, and this is the one observed by a woman at the birth of her first-born. In the case of a male first-born, the rite occurred forty days after the birth, and in the case of a female first-born, the rite occurred eighty days after. In preaching on this text, I would spend less time talking about OT rites and more time talking about Jesus and the washing that comes in Holy Baptism.

The trio Benedictus, Magnificat, and Nunc Dimittis are known as the “Evangelical Canticles.” The text today includes the canticle Nunc Dimittis, which has been a part of the Church’s liturgical life since early times. It has been used historically in connection

with Compline and Vespers and at Evensong in the Anglican Church, and in Divine Service as well as Compline and Vespers by the Lutherans.

Its placement and location in the liturgy during Divine Service has the effect of directing the focus of the participant to the Sacrament where, like Simeon, we have seen the Christ and His salvation. Reed more eloquently puts it that “The Nunc Dimittis forms an appropriate and beautiful conclusion to the Service, relating the mystery of the Holy Communion to that of the incarnation.” This is the Sunday to point that out to the hearers in the sermon.

While the Lutheran placement of this canticle as part of the post-communion liturgy is unusual, it is not unknown. Reed notes that

it is found in the Greek Church at the close of the Liturgy, but is not given in the Roman or Anglican services of Holy Communion. It is appointed, however, at this place in the ancient Spanish (Mozarabic) Liturgy. Luther’s Orders for the Holy Communion do not mention it, but it is given in the Swedish Liturgy, 1531, and in some of the earliest German Orders of the sixteenth century (Nbg., 1525, Strass. 1525).

(Both quotes are from Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, Muhlenberg, Philadelphia, 1947, p. 365)

Textual Notes

22. The words “Καὶ ὅτε ἐπλήσθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι – and when the days were fulfilled” is a common phrase indicating that it was time for something to happen or time to do something. In this case it was time for “τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ αὐτῶν κατὰ τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως – the purification of them according to the Law of Moses.” This purification involves both mother and child.

The word “καθαρισμοῦ” is here consistently translated as “purification,” and here it refers to an OT rite instituted in Leviticus 12:2-6. If you are going to quote from that text, which is very graphic, to help the reader better understand what’s going on here, you might want to employ the figure of speech known as euphemism. And we *do* sort of have to explain what’s going on here, don’t we?

In OT times, when a woman had a baby, a few weeks after the baby was born, she was supposed to go the Temple for a religious ritual. She would take the baby, and she would take an animal to be sacrificed, and would make her way to the Temple. When she got to the Temple, a priest – like a pastor – would take her baby and her sacrifice.

The animal would be sacrificed, a reminder to all that blood is life and that because of sin we die, and that we need a savior from sin. The mother would be washed, symbolizing her cleansing from sin and the results of sin. The priest would say some words of

blessing to the baby and its mother, reminding them that one day Messiah would come to be that savior.

I still use Alfred Edersheim's *The Temple Ministry and Services* by, available online, as my primary go-to resource for those things. It's dated, but really how much has changed about OT Temple ritual in the last hundred years? And given that there are ten wrong conclusions based on false premises for every one right conclusion in most modern Bible scholarship, and given the flawed theological axe that is constantly being ground by those people, his straightforward explanations of these things is a breath of fresh air. ODCC says of him that he was "somewhat lacking in critical judgment" as if it were a negative.

Everything that I have read in and about Edersheim leads me to believe that he as an actual Christian, and a person who believed that the Bible was true. Such were relatively rare qualities in Western Europe at that time. We note that when he quotes the Bible, he consistently seems to think that he is quoting from a flawlessly reliable source. In its article on him, WIK copies and pastes ODCC, leaving out the "somewhat lacking in critical judgment" judgment. Sometimes WIK disappoints.

He was an Austrian Jew who converted to Christianity later on in life for the right reason. While Karl Marx's German father converted from Judaism to Christianity to hold on to his government job, Edersheim's motives for conversion appear to be loftier. He went to seminary, and was ordained, and was a pastor in a Victorian England that had been pulled back from the brink of the total darkness of the Enlightenment.

This rite was supposed to take place a few weeks after the birth of the child. Depending on the route that the Holy Family took, it would have been a little over one hundred miles from Bethlehem to Nazareth, and another hundred from Nazareth to Jerusalem, the second trip probably taking longer because they probably would have avoided Samaria. But did they just stay in Bethlehem for those weeks and go directly from there to Jerusalem, then home to Nazareth?

It would have been one of those borderline calls whether to make that trip home and back or to stay in Bethlehem or nearby Jerusalem for those forty days. They clearly don't have a place to stay in Bethlehem because if they would have had relatives or somebody else that they could have stayed with in Bethlehem, they would have stayed with them and not in the inn. Joseph had a trade that could be plied in Jerusalem as well as in Nazareth.

It also ought to be noted that those hundred miles that seem to most Americans – even those in good shape – daunting, would have to them been routine. They never thought about how much faster this trip would be by car, bus, or train because...Google maps says you can walk one hundred miles in thirty-three hours, but I'll bet experienced walkers like Joseph and Mary could have halved that.

In his newest book *David and Goliath*, Malcolm Gladwell talks about how Lawrence of Arabia was able to defeat a much larger force with a much smaller force of Bedouins. One advantage the Bedouins had was that they were more mobile than their enemies, the Ottoman Turks. They were able to travel over one hundred miles in a single day with only a small canteen of water, and it was desert. The route that Joseph and Mary took was less harsh, including many places that had water and a more moderate climate.

At the end of forty days, the length of time dictated by Leviticus at the birth of a male child, they did their religious duty and “ἀνήγαγον αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα παραστήσαι τῷ Κυρίῳ – they brought him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.” Note for your hearers that this took place in Temple, not in a synagogue, like the one in Nazareth, for example. Use descriptive language to place them in that time and that place. Make them feel the Temple and its activities as well as see them.

23. Luke quotes from Exodus 13:2, “the Law of the Lord,” that the first-born male is “holy - ἅγιον” to the Lord. You may want to remind your hearer of the connection of this rite to the Exodus. In particular, this rite comes directly out of the last plague, the killing by God of everything Egyptian and first-born. The Israelite first-born, including their first-born sons, were passed over by the angel of death.

The rite was instituted by God to commemorate that passing over, and to remind Israel that each first-born male belongs to Him. In Numbers 3:13 this rationale is spelled out, “for all the first-born are mine; on the day that I slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the first-born in Israel, both of man and beast; they shall be mine; I am the Lord.” (RSV)

This is one of several parallels between the Exodus and the life of Jesus, the One who delivers us from our slavery to sin. Use OT events like the Exodus, including that delivery from slavery, as metaphor to illustrate NT events, like the writers of the NT do. Talk about the Sacrament of the Altar as having its origins in the Passover meal. Jesus is our Passover Lamb, etc.

And in another sense, we could say that this rite of purification and all OT ceremonial law is fulfilled in Jesus, who brings us that victory over our slavery to sin. Reference the Book of Hebrews, who waxes eloquently and at length about the OT things that find their fulfillment in Jesus. That being the case, those things being fulfilled in Jesus, that’s why we don’t do it anymore. People wonder about that. And don’t allegorize.

24. In connection with the rite, an actual sacrifice would be brought to be actually sacrificed, and in this case “ζευγος τρυγόνων ἢ δύο νοσσοῦς περιστερῶν – a pair of turtle-doves or two pigeons,” as were prescribed in Leviticus 1:14. There were several levels of value to sacrifices made in Temple, and they are articulated in those first few

chapters of Leviticus. In the fifth chapter (7-10), this lesser valued sacrifice was allowed and indicated for poorer, but not the poorest, people.

Luke doesn't tell us whether it was turtle-doves or pigeons because that's not important. What *is* important is that they did what they were supposed to do with regards to OT law and ritual. Mary and Joseph are consistently portrayed in the Bible as devoutly religious people. If we get the idea that every single parent was making the trek from places like Nazareth to do this rite, then we need only look at the large number of "Christians" here and world-wide who fail to journey across town or even across the street to get their babies baptized.

It is also noteworthy that Joseph was not a wealthy man, and neither was he poverty stricken. We know that he was a carpenter, so he worked, and he worked with his hands, and he made stuff out of wood. From the offering brought, we would have to conclude that carpenters in those days were not as well-paid as carpenters in our time and place. The UBC (United Brotherhood of Carpenters) probably has something to do with that.

25. Simeon is introduced to us as a man "δίκαιος καὶ εὐλαβής – righteous and devout." The first adjective is common and it means that Simeon was a Christian, as can be clearly seen by what follows. The second adjective is rare, occurring only four times in the NT, all of which are generated by Luke's pen, one here and three in the Acts of the Apostles.

By using this word, Luke is putting Simeon into the same category as the "devout" pilgrims to Passover (Acts 2:5), the "devout" men courageous enough to bury Stephan (8:2), and according to Paul, Ananias (22:12). Simeon is a Christian, and he was an exemplary Christian, and the Holy Spirit had been communicating with him.

Simeon is said to be "προσδεχόμενος παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ – waiting for the advocacy of Israel." of which Isaiah in particular speaks, something that will come with the coming of Messiah, and only with that coming. The verb indicates waiting for a good thing with eager expectation, and the noun is "παράκλησις," a word that it is a cognate of "παράκλητος," a favorite word of John, particularly when speaking of the Holy Spirit.

The word means an advocate, like an ombudsman or an attorney, and with spirit comes life. The one for whom Simeon waits will be one who will be an advocate before the judge, who will plead our case for us. Words like "comfort" and "encouragement" miss the mark. The Paraclete is much more than that, and I've taken to using that word – transliterated from the Greek – when it appears in the NT.

Paraclete – along with words like Transfiguration and Trinity, for example – is a distinctly Christian word, and you can tell that because it is not included in the dictionary built in to Microsoft Word. The word has a distinctly Christian meaning, understood by Christians and unable to be understood by others. As a general rule, if you find yourself constantly using several words to define another word, you should teach that word to Christians, so that it likewise becomes part of their vocabulary.

Finally, it is said of Simeon that “πνεῦμα ἦν ἅγιον – the Spirit was Holy,” variously translated “the Spirit that was Holy” or “The Holy Spirit.” He further says that the spirit was “upon him.” The two words that are translated “upon him” are “ἐπ’ αὐτόν,” the preposition ἐπὶ followed by a noun in the accusative case, motion implied on or over, not a thing at rest.

Furthermore, the preposition in any case can be used to indicate the authority of one over another (FGG), in this case the Holy Spirit ruling over Simeon. At this point, the Holy Spirit is guiding Simeon’s ways, his words, even his very thoughts. Simeon is in the zone. While this phrase is another way to say that Simeon was a Christian, it says more than *just* a Christian, and clearly Simeon is all that.

The Holy Spirit gives life, and the Church of God was clearly in a very lively period in that period and through the day of Pentecost. That same Holy Spirit comes, bringing life and consolation, in Word and Sacrament these days, and the congregation that has that, not necessarily the one that has a calendar crowded with activities, is the one that is alive and breathing. That same Spirit is a constant advocate before the Father for the Christian.

26. Luke explains this by saying of Simeon that something “ἦν αὐτῷ κεχρηματισμένον ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος τοῦ Ἁγίου – was being revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.” The verb “to reveal” occurs only nine times in the NT, often with overtones of warning, often with connotations of divine intervention or direction, like here. The imperfect tense indicates that this revelation was an ongoing phenomenon.

We are not told by what means that revelation came. Angels seem to be coming with messages to a lot of different people. You can make an argument that, given all the angel activity that preceded this incident, it is assumed that the reader will assume that it was an angel. Or you can make an argument that, since Luke has told us about the other angelic revelations, he would have told us about one to Simeon if such a one had occurred.

What has been divinely revealed to Simeon is that “μὴ ἰδεῖν θάνατον πρὶν ἢ ἂν ἴδῃ τὸν Χριστὸν Κυρίου – not to see death until he should see the Christ of the Lord.” Being a Priest, Simeon would have been close to Temple and her ritual. Like the modern pastor, he had a bird’s eye view on theology and matters theological. Believers knew that the Christ would one day come. Simeon knew that the day was imminent.

27. It says that Simeon was “ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι – with the Spirit” when he came into the Temple. I don’t suppose the Spirit was visible, and we ought not to think of Simeon rolling on the floor. The preposition “ἐν” followed by a noun in the dative case, as is the case here, indicates location beside. The picture painted here by Luke is that of Simeon walking into the Temple, side by side, accompanied by the Holy Spirit.

Several modern English translations have Simeon “led” by the Spirit into the Temple, which would have been the meaning had the noun been in the accusative case, but it’s not. Others speak of him being “in the spirit,” and I don’t know if the translators were

just lazy or American Pentecostals eagerly searching for biblical examples of Holy Rollers like them. The KJV rendering of “by the spirit” is most accurate.

Like Zacharias, the father of John the Baptizer, Simeon would have been doing shift work serving at Temple, and he was there when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus, who is described as a “παιδίον,” the generic word for “child,” for the rite. The sentence structure does not indicate that there was anything particularly miraculous about the timing that sees Simeon converging with Jesus in the Temple for this rite. We can probably assume that Simeon was not the only priest waiting for the Christ, but he is the only one we know of to whom God has revealed that he would not see death until he has seen the Christ.

Switching back now to Mary and Joseph, Luke notes that they “οἰῆσαι αὐτοὺς κατὰ τὸ εἰθισμένον τοῦ νόμου περὶ αὐτοῦ – did the things according to the custom of the Law with regards to him.” In this specific area of bringing their first-born they are seen to be devout and religious, much like we these days think of parents who bring their babies for baptism in a different light than those who don’t.

Of course in neither case is it the act that makes the parents Christian, but instead it is because they are Christians that they act like it and do acts that Christians do. And we should always remember and note that really it’s God working through Church to do these good things for babies, et al. The translations that have Mary and Jesus doing this “for him” are wrong, and I guess it’s my day to pound translators.

28. Simeon “αὐτὸς ἐδέξατο αὐτὸ εἰς τὰς ἀγκάλας καὶ εὐλόγησεν τὸν Θεὸν – received him into the arms and blessed God.” The verb “εὐλογέω,” here and almost always translated “blessed,” means literally “good words.” It simply means that Simeon is doing his job and chanting the liturgy. I would be interested to know what those words were, and what the liturgy was, but the Internet doesn’t seem to know. We do know what Simeon said.

Nunc Dimittis

The words that follow, the Nunc Dimittis, clearly indicate that Simeon knew and believed that the baby held in his arms was none other than the Christ. How did he know that? As is often and probably always the case when God reveals things, there is a divine and spiritual element and there is human or physical element to this revelation. God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. He has just spoken to people through angels, including an angel in a dream. The Bible is written by humans who are moved by the Holy Spirit.

As noted before, being a Priest Simeon would have been very much aware of the religious scene in and around Judea. Luke has told us that, after the shepherds had gone to Bethlehem and seen the baby Jesus, they “made known the saying which had been told them” by the angels “concerning the child,” and that “all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.”

It's not a stretch to think that word of those events related by the eye-witness Shepherds would have gotten back to Simeon and other priests. Simeon's ears especially would have been attuned to such news, given the promise that had been made to him. Right after this, Luke will relate to us the account of Anna the Prophetess, who clearly knows that something is going on, and that something is the Christ.

In Matthew 2:4ff, we see that "the chief priests and scribes" knew exactly where to find the "King of the Jews," and we can safely assume that a Christian like Simeon would have known that also, and could at least have had inkling that Jesus was the Christ. Did he extrapolate that Jesus would be coming to Temple forty days after his birth, and trade shifts with another priest so that he would be the one to do the rite? Maybe. Maybe not.

The Nunc, or the Song of Simeon, is some of the most beautiful words every uttered. I have no idea why this canticle was downgraded from "shall" in TLH to optional in LW and LSB. *Thank the Lord* is the first option Post-Communion Canticle in LSB Divine Service settings one and two.

Don't get me wrong; I'm all for thanking the Lord and singing His praise, and I think it would be good if we told everyone what He has done, etc. Was that it? Did we deliberately put yet another dose of the Law "tell everyone what He has done" into the liturgy? As if we haven't heard *that* before.

And I used to be able to say that the liturgy is taken from the Bible, and that in LSB the Bible verses from which the section is taken are actually printed to the right of the title of that section, but not anymore. There are no Bible verses to the right of the title of *Thank the Lord*. What? Did somebody just make this up? It's not that *Thank the Lord* is bad.

It's that you have to eliminate the Song of Simeon, which is better, a passionate, inspired work, one that includes rich language, one that freely quotes from the OT, to have room for something else. *Big Shrimpin'*, that new show on History Channel is okay, but only so many reality shows make it into the rotation, and if I make that show part of my weekly watch, then what would I have to take out?

29. Speaking to God, Simeon calls himself "τὸν δοῦλόν σου – your servant," "δεσπότης – Master," not the normal "Lord – κυριος." Δεσπότης, from which comes our word "despot," emphasizes the relationship of one who is above another. It is the word that you would have used to refer to one who has absolute authority, one to whom Simeon's submission as a servant is absolute.

He asks "ἀπολύεις...κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου ἐν εἰρήνῃ – to depart...according to your Word, in peace." The noun "ῥήμά" is commonly used to describe a word or a command from

God, the promise referred to earlier. The word “εἰρήνῃ” is the equivalent of “shalom,” and means that everything is right in God’s world. Like many elderly, Simeon is waiting for God to take him home, and he will now die in peace.

30. He then gives the reason why he is now ready to die, and to die in peace. The reason is “ὅτι εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου τὸ σωτήριόν σου – because I have seen with my own eyes your salvation.” This may be the origin of the idiom that we still use today, the one that has morphed into “I saw it with my own *two* eyes.” And he saw “Your salvation,” a Synecdoche, a figure of speech in which a part used to refer to the whole, or the whole to a part. When Simeon sees Jesus, the part, he sees God’s salvation, the whole that included a lot more elements, things like faith and the Word et al, with Jesus at the center.

31. The salvation of God, Simeon continues, “ὃ ἡτοίμασας κατὰ πρόσωπον πάντων τῶν λαῶν – you prepared in front of the face of all the people.” The preposition κατὰ followed by the noun πρόσωπον is to be seen here in the same way as the phrase is used in Galatians 2:11 “to the face” or as we might put it in idiomatic form, “right in front of your face.”

The words and events of the OT did not happen in secret, but in the open, for all “the people,” i.e. Israel, later Judah, to see. They were able to be seen by all, and if you weren’t there then you can read about it because they wrote it down. What God is doing in Jesus was being done not in secret, but “right in front of your face,” and some believed and some did not, sort of like they do today.

In like manner, every Sunday morning around the world, and at other times, people are seeing with their own eyes, right in front of their faces, in many venues holding in their hand, the really present Jesus and the salvation of God. Our singing of this canticle when we sing it, right after the Sacrament, is our confession of what has just taken place in that Sacrament.

32. He then talks about Jesus as “φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν – a light for revelation to the Gentiles.” The preposition εἰς followed by the noun ἀποκάλυψις in the accusative case means “into,” or that Jesus is one through whom Gentiles will be led “into” the understanding of God and all things religious. Here we see that God’s salvation is for us Gentiles as well as the Jews, an idea that was frequently expressed in the OT, largely forgotten by the Jews of Jesus’ day, and very clearly and frequently espoused by Jesus and the Apostles after Him.

He also speaks of Jesus in terms of “δόξαν λαοῦ σου Ἰσραὴλ. – the glory of your people Israel.” It’s another way to say that salvation is for even the “Lost Tribes of Israel,” even and especially the hated Samaritans, as well as for the found tribe of Judah. When He sends His Apostles, He sends them specifically to this group. It is a common and consistent theme in Jesus, one that often gets Him into hot water with His fellow Jews.

33. Almost all of the modern translations talk about “his father and mother,” and the KJV and a few others talk about “Joseph and his mother,” the correct rendering. Those two

variant readings are, in fact, found in the Greek NT, and those with a working knowledge of Greek can use the apparatus to see them. Looking at the variants in that apparatus, we see that there is not overwhelming evidence for either reading, but how can we possibly think that Luke would have called Mary's husband the "father" of Jesus?

Up to this point in his book, Luke has hammered it home over and over again, going into great detail, saying it in as many ways as it can be said that God, not Joseph, is the father of Jesus. And now he's going to call Joseph the "father" of Jesus? It again causes us to wonder at the motives of the modern translators and manuscript organizers, many of whom do not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, but that he had a different father. KJV, here I come...

Joseph and His mother "θαυμάζοντες ἐπὶ τοῖς λαλουμένοις περὶ αὐτοῦ – were amazed at the things that had been said about Him." The things said would have included the words of Simeon, and also the words spoken by the angels, and if the shepherds – having been visited by angels – came to Bethlehem and then went out and told people what they had seen and heard, don't we suppose Mary and Joseph got wind of it. And would they not have told them about the angels when they visited the manger.

34. Next "εὐλόγησεν αὐτοὺς Συμεὼν – Simeon blessed them." He said good words to the Holy Family, and that word may well mean that he spoke the Aaronic Benediction or something like it to them. Now Simeon directs his words to "Μαριάμ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ – Mary the mother of Him," and says that Jesus is "εἶται εἰς πτώσιν καὶ ἀνάστασιν πολλῶν ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ – appointed for the falling and rising of many" in Israel.

The verb κείται means "appointed" or "destined," and the idea here is that because of Jesus people will either stand or they will fall, and as He becomes more well-known, it becomes clear that with Jesus it is an either/or proposition. The same holds true today. Those who reject Him fall, and the fall is great; all the way to hell, and those who rise up rise all the way to heaven.

He also says that Jesus will be "σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον – a sign spoken against." You may recall that word σημεῖον from v. 12, when this "sign" is given the shepherds; "you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." A σημεῖον is a miraculous, supernatural happening, and many accepted the Virgin Birth. Others did not.

Later on, when Jesus did miracles, they were "spoken against" by many, often to His face, but they were believed by some. Opponents of Christianity have always spoken against the Virgin Birth, so there's nothing new there. The new thing is that people who bear the name of Christ are not only doing that, but are leading the way in doing that.

And when it comes to miraculous things like Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar, of course the pagans don't believe anything is going on there. Since the Reformation, many Christians share that belief with those people. Implicit in the Reformed criticism that we are "too Catholic," is their idea that our thinking like we do is for us a Catholic remnant.

It's not. Our teaching on the Sacraments is biblical, and not Catholic at all. The Roman Church believes that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus and the bread and wine are no longer there. That's Transubstantiation, and it was made official at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, when the Church really began to go off the rails.

The Reformed believe in a symbolical presence of Jesus in Communion, and they don't believe much of anything is going on in Baptism, but it's okay because you aren't accountable for your sins until the Age of Accountability. They believe that bread and wine are present at Communion, but Jesus is not actually present in any tangible way.

The biblical teaching on the Sacraments is that Baptism does something and that the bread and wine are present in the Sacrament of the Altar. So are the body and blood of Jesus present "in, with, and under" the forms of bread and wine, which remain. So at the Sacrament the bread and wine are there and so are the body and blood; the Real Presence.

35. Turning now to Mary, he says, "καὶ σοῦ δὲ αὐτῆς τὴν ψυχὴν διελύσεται ῥομφαία – and a sword will pierce the heart of you, of her." All the things that happen to Jesus in His life, Mary sees them as a mother would see them. That includes the pleasant things in the life of Jesus. It also includes thing unpleasant, up to and including The Crucifixion.

Barnes puts it like this,

Yea, a sword ... - The sufferings and death of thy Son shall deeply afflict thy soul. And if Mary had not been thus forewarned and sustained by strong faith, she could not have borne the trials which came upon her Son; but God prepared her for it, and the holy mother of the dying Saviour was sustained.

He continues, "ὅπως ἂν ἀποκαλυφθῶσιν ἐκ πολλῶν καρδιῶν διαλογισμοί – so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," and that's a very apt description of one of the effects of the Ministry of Jesus. In particular, in his discussions with the Religious Leaders we see Him using words and Logic to reveal to all what they are really thinking.

Barnes continues,

This is connected with the preceding verse: "He shall be a sign, a conspicuous object to be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be made manifest - that is, that they "might show" how much they hated holiness. Nothing so "brings out" the feelings of sinners as to tell them of Jesus Christ. Many treat him with silent contempt; many are ready to gnash their teeth; many curse him; all show how much by nature the heart is opposed to religion, and thus are really, in spite of themselves, fulfilling the scriptures and the prophecies. So true it that "none can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost,

Anna the Prophetess

The account of Anna causes discomfort, both for the preacher and for the hearer. Theology is often about distinctions, and in the case of Anna, it's an easy distinction. Anna speaks the Word of God, like Elizabeth earlier spoke the Word of God. But neither of those women were Pastors, and *speaking* the Word is different from *preaching* it.

36. Luke calls her “Καὶ ἦν Ἄννα προφῆτις – and Anna was a prophetess.” Most of the translations get it right. That word is a feminine noun (προφῆτις, ἰδος, ἡ), and it occurs in the NT here and in Revelation 2:20, in reference to Jezebel, who is a bad thing. The masculine form of that noun (προφήτης, ου, ὁ) occurs quite a bit in the NT (146 times).

Luke is very specific about which Anna he's talking about, saying that she is, “θυγάτηρ Φανουήλ, ἐκ φυλῆς Ἀσήρ – a daughter of Phanuel, from the Tribe of Asher.” When we talk about the “lost tribes” of Israel, we include Asher, but here we see that at least one of the descendants of that lost tribe survived the genocide. Phanuel is an apocryphal angel.

Ellicott says of Anna the Prophetess,

The fact is in many ways remarkable. We find a woman recognised as a prophetess at a time when no man is recognised as a prophet. She bears the name of the mother of the founder of the School of the Prophets, identical with that which the legends of Apocryphal Gospels assign to the mother of the Virgin. She is named, as if it were a well-known fact, as having been the wife of Phanuel, and she is not of the tribe of Judah, but of Aser. That tribe, then, though belonging to the Ten that had been carried into exile by Shalmaneser ([2Kings 17:6](#)), had not been altogether lost. Some, at least, of its members survived and cherished the genealogies of their descent...

Anna was no spring chicken, “αὕτη προβεβηκυῖα ἐν ἡμέραις πολλαῖς, ζήσασα μετὰ ἀνδρὸς ἔτη ἑπτὰ ἀπὸ τῆς παρθενίας αὐτῆς – she was greatly advanced in years, having lived with a husband seven years from when she was a virgin.” If you do the maths, she was very likely married as a teen – the norm – and widowed when only in her twenties.

Expositors offers a different maths,

ἔως: either a widow for eighty-four years (Godet), or, as most think, a widow till the eighty-fourth year of her life. The former rendering would make her very old: married, say, at sixteen, seven years a wife, eighty-four years a widow = 107; not impossible, and borne out by the πολλαῖς after ἡμέραις

37. She was now a widow aged eighty-four, or more, “ἢ οὐκ ἀφίστατο τοῦ ἱεροῦ νηστείας καὶ δεήσεων λατρεύουσα νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν – who did not leave the Temple, with fastings and prayers serving night and day.” The “serving” would have included worship of God and all that entailed, and perhaps she assisted the priests in their work.

38. καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐπιστᾶσα ἀνθωμολογεῖτο τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἐλάλει περὶ αὐτοῦ πᾶσιν τοῖς προσδεχομένοις λύτρωσιν Ἰερουσαλήμ.

Law/Gospel

Unclean/Clean – Because of sin, we are unclean. Pain in childbirth and the things associated with it are makes of sin. In the waters of Baptism we are cleansed.

Death/Life – Sin brings death, and the savior from sin brings life.

Slavery/Freedom – Harkening back to the Exodus, God brought His people out of slavery and into freedom. Make use of things like the Red Sea Crossing, the Passover and all of its elements, the Wilderness wanderings, et al to talk about Jesus.

Sermon Titles

Simeon’s Song

Hymns

Nunc Dimittis – LSB Divine Service I and II and Compline

Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace – LSB 937

In Peace and Joy I Now Depart – LSB 938

Sing Christmas Song during the Christmas Season

Rev. Steven L. Anderson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, IA

Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Mark).
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*.. The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*. Concordia Publishing House,
1993

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, *A Concordance to the Greek
Testament*. T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek
Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford
University Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1977.

WP – A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Baker, 1930

VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *An Expository Dictionary of
Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – www.wikipedia.com

BIB – www.biblos.com

GBO – www.greekbible.com

Digital Classics Library - www.perseus.tufts.edu

Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html