

Grace and peace are yours through Jesus. Amen.

Are you ready to meet Jesus? Finally, isn't that what Christmas is all about, meeting Jesus? It's just a week away and Jesus is coming. Are you ready to meet him? Now I'm not talking about trees and presents and cookies. I'm talking about here. In your heart. Are you ready to meet Jesus? What about as your life draws to a close? Then are you ready to meet Jesus? Wow! That just got a lot more serious than trees and cookies. Makes you think, doesn't it? Are you ready to meet Jesus?

We are introduced to a man, Simeon. He was ready to meet Jesus. Couldn't wait. Was told in some special way by God himself that Simeon would not die until he had the chance to meet Jesus. Can you imagine his expectation? Can you sense the longing in his life? He wakes up. Will this be the day? He goes to sleep. Will tomorrow be the day? He couldn't count the days like children do, by tearing off one more paper on a paper chain, because he didn't know the day. But he knew he would get to meet Jesus.

And he was ready. He was righteous, devout, the Holy Spirit was on him. And then it happened. He was in the temple. And so were Mary and Joseph and best of all, Jesus himself! Now God had to reveal to Simeon by some miracle that this was Jesus, ok. Jesus wasn't wearing a personalized tshirt. And then by another miracle, Simeon wrests a six week old baby from his mother's arms. In a crowded place. How do you do that? Simeon was so ready to meet Jesus, God worked miracles to make it happen. Even Simeon's posture indicated he was ready to meet Jesus. He took the child in his arms. The words picture the posture you think of when someone hands you a child. His arms are bent. He's ready to cradle the Christ. His head bows down in humility. He's ready to meet Jesus.

Does this describe us? Arms bent, ready to meet Jesus? Or arms bent, hanging on to our sins? Do we rush right up to Jesus, or is our preparation so much about everything else, we still have Jesus at arm's length? Is your heart ready to receive Jesus as the King and Savior of the world, or are you the frightened single uncle, who wants nothing to do with a baby? Is your heart bent out of shape by your sin, or are you still living in the delusion of, "I'm ok. You're ok."? If Jesus comes for you tonight, are you ready to meet Jesus?

Jesus came to make you ready. That's what Christmas is all about, being ready to meet Jesus. Jesus took away your sins. Jesus straightened out your heart with his forgiveness. Jesus lifted up your head with his resurrection so you are ready to meet him. Jesus is your own, personal, salvation. That your own eyes of faith have seen. Jesus' forgiveness, that's how you are ready to meet him. Jesus' love, that gets you ready to meet Jesus.

Simeon wasn't only ready on earth to meet Jesus. Simeon was ready to meet Jesus at the end of his earthly life. We get the sense that Simeon was near death. Now he had seen Jesus. He was ready to go and be with Jesus. He was ready to go in peace. In peace. Think about that. Ready to go in peace. Only a person who knows Jesus personally can leave this life in peace. Simeon knew this world was not his home. He couldn't wait to be dismissed, sent away from this life. He had peace.

Why? My own eyes have seen your salvation. Simeon didn't just hear some vague rumor about Jesus. Simeon saw Jesus. Simeon held Jesus. Simeon was ready to meet Jesus, not just on this earth, but in heaven. Wouldn't you love to have that attitude? Wouldn't you love to be like Simeon? Ready to meet Jesus on earth and ready to see Jesus forever in heaven?

You can be ready and by God's grace, you are ready. Jesus didn't just come for Simeon. Jesus came for everyone. Now, let's learn a lesson from Simeon. Simeon first talked about the meaning Jesus had for him, personally. Simeon first saw Jesus as coming for himself. First, Simeon needed to have that personal relationship, that personal seeing of Jesus with his own eyes, for his own peace, his own salvation. And then Simeon could see how Jesus came for everyone.

God prepared his salvation in the sight of all people, for everyone to see. God did the hard work in preparing you to meet Jesus. First of all, he sent Jesus to this earth. Second of all, God had Jesus live a perfect life. Thirdly, God had his own Son die on a cross to take away your sins. Then, God raised Jesus from the dead to prove he was perfect (and so are you) and prove sin is forgiven (that means you). All that hard work is done, but it's meaningless unless God also does what sometimes is the most difficult of all: preparing your own heart to meet Jesus, leading us to see our sins and bow our heads to admit Jesus is the only solution, the only Savior.

He is the Savior for all, for all, for all people. A light for revelation to the Gentiles (all those people who are not Israel) and for glory to your people Israel. Israel here is used in the spiritual sense for all those with faith, all those with faith are God's people, no matter the nationality. Jesus came for all. Jesus gets all of us ready to meet him.

You know, I think it's easy to read this account and even to sing the song Simeon sang and be a little jealous. Simeon got to meet Jesus! Simeon got to hold Jesus in his arms. Simeon got to thank God that Jesus came for him and Simeon got to sing that Jesus came for everyone. I'll never get to do that. I'll never be that ready to meet Jesus. Not so fast! Think of what many of you will do in just a few minutes. You will walk up, right here, and into your bent hands will be placed the body of Jesus. I know it looks like bread but Jesus said, "This is my body!" You will hold Jesus, like Simeon did. You will meet Jesus, face to face, eye to eye, as close as you will ever get to Jesus on this earth. How much closer can you be to Jesus than to hold him in your hands? How much more ready can you be to meet Jesus, not just tonight, but that night when your life on this earth ends and the perfect heavenly life begins?

Can you now see why we place this song after the Lord's Supper in our regular order of service on Sunday and most Thursdays? Simeon just held Jesus. Now he was ready to go and be with Jesus forever. We have just held Jesus. Now we are ready to go and be with Jesus forever. Ready to meet Jesus? Oh yeah! I can't wait! I'm ready now. I'm ready when life ends. I'm always ready to meet Jesus. Amen.