Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15

**The Lord said to Moses, 2“Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.” 3Then Moses said to the people, 11“When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, 12you shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the Lord’s. 13Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. 14And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’**

Colossians 3:12–17**Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

**Luke 2:22-40**

**And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) 24and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” 25Now 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. 26And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. 27And 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, 28he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,**

 **29 “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,**

**according to your word; 30for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32a light for revelation to the Gentiles,**

**and for glory to your people Israel.”**

**33And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”**

**36And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, 37and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. 38And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.**

**39And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.**

Good things come to those who wait; at least that's what I've been told.  I've never been very good at waiting.  In fact, my wife got on my case just before Christmas when I was frustrated with my computer with the statement, “Patience.” Patience is a virtue.  It's just not one of my virtues.  Truth be told, we can all confess this same reality in one way or another.  There's not a single person here who is totally, completely, patiently virtuous in all areas of life.  I know that there are things we don't mind waiting for.  I'm not in any hurry to do my taxes!  I can certainly wait for some things, but we all have certain things that we just can't—or won't—wait for.  It is this impatience that causes us to take action.  It is this impatient that often winds up causing problems and creating trouble, all of which could have been avoided if we just waited patiently.  But, that's easier said than done, isn't it?

It is with this understanding of patience that we turn our attention to the Gospel lesson for this morning.  **"Lord, You are now letting Your servant depart in peace, just as You have promised—according to Your Word."**  Truly, what an outstanding confession of patient, virtuous faith!  Of course, if you've spent any amount of time around a nursing home or the terminally ill, you know that such confessions, while certainly great and profound, are not exactly rare.  I can't tell you how many times I've heard our elderly folks actually complain that God is still keeping them around here.  They've lived life and all they want now is to go home to heaven!  "Why doesn't God just take me home already?!  I'm ready to go!" I guess when you view it in this light, maybe Simeon's song or confession of faith isn't so spectacular after all.

But wait. Nowhere in Scripture are we told that Simeon was an aged, elderly man.  We do know from this text that the prophetess Anna was a very patient, faithful woman.  We're told that at the time when Mary and Joseph came to the temple Anna was eighty-four years old.  She had been a widow for the last sixty-four or sixty-five years.  Think about that for a moment.  That's patience!  That's faith.  And even more profound and noteworthy, Anna didn't sit around all that time complaining about being a widow or having nothing to do or asking why God doesn't get on board with her plan and take her home to heaven.  Anna recognized that God was calling her to be patient, faithfully patient.  Anna used her time in a very faithful way.  She spent her days at the temple, continuously worshipping and fasting and praying.  She spent her days glorifying God.  And when Anna came face to face with the Christ child, she then began to evangelize everyone within earshot, sharing the joy of God's promise made flesh; the joy that the wait was over.  Redemption was here in the person of Jesus Christ.  God kept His Word.  God was here and at work for the good of His people.  What a tremendous model of faith in action.  How much we could learn from this blessed woman, if only we were patient enough to try.

But, let’s go back to Simeon.  Actually, we have no idea how old was.  God doesn't tell us.  For all we know, he could've been younger than Mary and Joseph!  However, it works well with our understanding of blessed patience to assume that Simeon was barely holding onto life until he could get that one fleeting glimpse of the Messiah before being mercifully released in death.  We hear this and we automatically assume that Simeon was no different than our elderly loved ones who complain that God won't take them home to heaven yet.  However, God doesn't tell us this.  He never tells us how old Simeon is when this takes place.  Why?  Because the age of the saint has nothing to do with his/her fidelity.  That's what makes this such a profound expression of faith and trust in God's almighty Word.

Simeon fully believed that God was going to make good on His promise and save His people from all their sins through the Savior He would personally send into this world.  Through the working of the Holy Spirit, Simeon was promised by God that he would behold the Messiah with his own eyes in his lifetime, before God would call him home to heaven.  Simeon waited.  He was faithfully patient, trusting that God knew what He was doing and was doing it all according to His divine timetable, working all things for the good of His people.

Simeon had faith that God would work this promise and plan when the time was right.  Now having personally beheld God's all-redeeming plan of salvation in the flesh, in his arms, Simeon was joyously relieved.  It doesn't matter whether Simeon was 25 or 95 years old.  He could now die perfectly happy and content, fully knowing and trusting that God was keeping His promise and actively saving His people from all sin, death, and damnation.  He knew what was really important in terms of life and salvation, and he knew that he was holding it right there in his very arms.  That's faith!  That's trust!

How many of us can honestly say that we have such a virtuous faith like that?  Good things come to those who wait, right?  We say that we believe that God works all things for the good of His people, and yet, unlike Simeon, how many of us will patiently wait for God to work according to His timetable?  How often we jump the gun and try to "help" God out or speed up the process.  How often we live our lives like, "my will be done," fully expecting God to bless us in our selfish, impatient ways.  Thank God that He is patient with us; patient and long-suffering and merciful.  My brothers and sisters in Christ, look here.

Behold!  The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!  Here is your Lord, in His Word and in His sacrament of Body and Blood, in your midst, bringing you His eternal gift of salvation.

Good things come to those who wait?  But wait!

God's good things have already come, even to those of us who won't wait or who won't hear and see and believe what our Lord has already said regarding these blessed, sacramental gifts of Immanuel.

I pray that this Good News that Jesus Christ, the same Jesus Christ who took on your flesh, who was crucified and risen for the complete forgiveness of all your sins, and who is the same Jesus Christ who is here with you today; who is here with you always, even to the end of the age, fills your hearts and minds, filling you with faithful patience, joy, and peace.

Today, when we sing the song of Simeon after communing, the Nunc Dimittis, God grant that these wonderful words of faithful contentedness and patience that we sing as we, like Simeon and Anna, receive, behold and give thanks for the very lamb of God, who takes away all the sin of the world, are not sung half-heartedly.  But that these tremendous words of faithful patience and contentedness in our Lord's rich grace and forgiveness enrich our hearts and be on our lips every day until that wonderful time that our Lord and Savior frees us from this veil of tears and calls us home to live with Him in eternal joy and peace.

AMEN