

Luke 2:22-40

If you've ever seen the movie or read the book, "The Princess Bride," you probably remember Inigo Montoya. His father was killed by the man with 6 fingers on one hand, and so Inigo spent his whole life tracking him down. Towards the end of the movie he finally finds him and as they prepare to duel he repeats, over and over again, "My name is Inigo Montoya, you killed my father, prepare to die."

If you haven't seen it, I'd recommend it, if you are interested in a good adventure story with a bit of romance and whole lot of humor. But let's imagine we are the 6 fingered man, well, not that we've killed anyone's father, but what goes through your mind when someone tells you to prepare to die?

Do you panic and think about all that you will miss out on? Will you be terrified because you fear death and don't know what it's like? Do you think of your family? Do you say a prayer and hope God has mercy on you? When you are asked to prepare to die, where do you find hope and any peace to calm the fears?

And left we think this question is purely hypothetical – I have had it before. In fact, I had it with my grandmother this past year when she went on hospice. "Let's get you ready to die." Not the most cheery conversation, no. And maybe a buzzkill

here right after Christmas, but perhaps there's more hope in this conversation than we might think.

In our gospel lesson we hear about a man who was prepared to die. He doesn't have six fingers on one hand, but he is a believer and has been shown by the Holy Spirit that he, before he dies, will see the Messiah, the Savior, God in the flesh.

And at the temple One day, God's promise to this man, Simeon, comes true when a little baby is brought to him. Baby Jesus.

Now, growing up, I always thought Simeon, this man at the temple who had the promise from God, I always thought he was crazy. If I had a promise from God that I wouldn't die until I saw the Savior, let me tell you the Savior was the last person I would ever want to see! I would run away and find the least likely place I would ever see the Messiah. I definitely wouldn't be on the steps of God's temple, the most likely place to find him.

But the fact that Simeon is actively searching for the Messiah even though it means he will die sometime after, I think that reveals to us something very telling. If you want to be prepared to die, you better have the Messiah, the Savior. Or to put it another way: having the Savior, the Messiah, that's worth dying for.

And so Simeon sees Jesus and he isn't afraid, "Oh no, am I going to get hit by lightning!?" He sees Jesus and rejoices. "Lord you let me go in Peace." If you want peace in the face of death, get Jesus. Because who is the One who will give you joy and celebration in heaven and the new creation far beyond what you might miss out on here? Jesus. He is the One who can raise your family up along with you to eternal life. And he is the One who can assure you that God, even when you are facing death, isn't mad at you because of your sins, but gracious and gives eternal life.

But Simeon wasn't the only one who was prepared to die. Let's not forget about the baby he held in his arms, Jesus. I'm sure over Christmas you have heard the hymn, "What Child is This." The beauty of this song is how it connects the baby at Christmas, to the man dying on the cross some thirty years later. "Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me for you, hail, hail, the word made flesh the babe the son of Mary." The author reminds us, as Simeon knew, that the baby in the manger, the baby Simeon held in his hands, would die for Simeon, and you. And he even tells Mary, "A sword will pierce your soul also." She will watch her child die. And so the foreshadowing in the song is even stronger, "what child is this who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping?" We often think of the manger

there, but what about the cross? Mary holding her adult son, while he sleeps the sleep of death, and watches him be laid to rest in a tomb.

So if we want to talk about being prepared to die, let's not forget about Jesus, the baby born to die. Let's not forget about the Savior who knew he had One job, to die. And he was scared, he sweat as blood in the garden before he was arrested, but that doesn't mean he wasn't prepared. He knew who he was and, while he knew it wouldn't be fun, he knew what would happen, he would rise again and win salvation for Simeon, for you, for the world. So he did it, and so we along with Simeon, praise him for it.

And after he rose he sent his disciples his church out with a message of life, and salvation. And they proclaimed it even though it got them killed, but they were prepared for it, because they, like Simeon, knew the Savior and knew they had eternal life.

And so we come here to hear that same message of life. We come here to hear the promise of forgiveness, to receive the promise of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit given through the Word and the word mixed with some water, or bread and wine. God wants you to be prepared, he doesn't want you to be so afraid. That's why he

came at Christmas, that's why he died and rose, and that's why he sends people out to proclaim it. That's why Simeon wasn't running from the baby Jesus, he was embracing him. Because Simeon knew he was going to die anyways, we all are, but he also knew, he also held in his arms, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Those same promises are yours, along with all who believe in Jesus. All with faith in Jesus, they are one with Christ and receive all the gifts that Simeon did. Which means that even if we are on our deathbeds, even if Inigo Montoya is holding a sword in front of us, we can have a little peace, a little hope. It doesn't mean it's fun, it doesn't mean it's not scary, but it means we aren't alone in the valley of the shadow of death, and we have hope in One, Jesus, who has been through it before and will see us safely out the other side. So when you are scared, when you're dying, call a Pastor. And a guy like me will come and we will pretend you are Simeon and we will toss Jesus right into your arms. We will bombard you with him and his promises, his word, how we know it's true. Why? Because when you have Jesus, you can depart in peace.

After communion we often times sing the Nunc Dimmittus, it's the song of Simeon. We sing, "You let your servant depart in peace." That isn't saying we can leave the church in peace, that is saying, just like Simeon meant, now that we have

heard and tasted and received the promises of God, we can depart this life in peace.

We know God isn't going to condemn us, we know he is going to raise us up.

When we sing that song, we are saying we are prepared to die. And you are.

Sometimes we feel like it more than others, that's why you call us to remind you, and when I'm dying I'll call another pastor to remind me. But, you, people of faith, baptized in his name, you have received the Savior, death has no dominion over you, so when your end comes, whenever it is, you'll be ready. You will be just fine, because you have the Savior who beats death and brings you with him through death to life everlasting. May we, like Simeon and Anna, rejoice in that truth. Amen.