

You Can Die Now

Gerhard Forde

Luke 2:(22–32) 33–40

Texts: Luke 2:22–40 / Hebrews 2:14–18

You can die now. You don't have to go on pretending you are something you are not. You don't have to keep hanging grimly to self-appointed dreams, assailing the seasons as you grow old, troubling a seemingly deaf heaven with your "bootless cries." It has all happened. You have seen it all and heard it all. You can die now.

Strange words? Especially to a congregation so young and vibrant and full of hopes and dreams and aspirations as this one? Strange words? Perhaps. But actually, you know, you have been singing those words – or words like them – these many years, singing the song of old Simeon on that day when the child Jesus was presented at the temple. "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation."

Old Simeon: righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel. Hanging on; waiting; watching the endless procession of people up to the temple to fulfill the requirements of the law – the law, that cradle subject to endless tinkering and elaboration and embellishment. No doubt loving that law, cherishing the cradle – yet knowing that for all that, it was empty and perhaps fearing, too, that maybe that's all there was.

Hanging on until his hands grew weary and his knuckles white. But then one day it happened. The Spirit told him, "This is it!" The Lord has suddenly come to his temple! There was a baby in the cradle. So old Simeon could sing his swan song – the song that has echoed down through the ages. I can die now. I have seen what there is to see.

And old Anna, the prophetess with nothing really to say. Eighty years old and nothing to say! Hanging around the temple, waiting, worshipping with fasting and prayer day and night. Old Anna finally found the words. She gave thanks to God and spoke of that baby in the cradle to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And so it is. The Lord has come to his temple. We have found the words. "This is my body given for you." "This is my blood of the New Testament, given for the remission of your sins." "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage."

So it is true. You've heard what there is to hear, seen what there is to see, you can taste it. You can sing Simeon's song. You can die now, you can let go, and because that is true, you can begin to live!

SOURCE

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