

The Presentation of our Lord

Text: Luke 2:22-32

Theme: Look Past the Groundhog and See Your Savior

As I prepared for this sermon, I thought that I might look for some kind of a link between Ground Hog Day and The Presentation of our Lord. I was flabberghasted. Ground Hog Day is the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord with everything that is Christian stripped away. It would be like Easter as Bunny Day or Christmas as Rudolf Day with no thought anymore of Jesus birth, death, or resurrection.

Here is how The Presentation of our Lord evolved into Ground Hog Day. In the Old Testament 40 days after the birth of a son and 66 days after the birth of a daughter, a woman was required to come to the temple with two sacrifices, a lamb as a burnt offering and a dove as a sin offering. If the family was poor, she would be allowed to offer two doves. (Leviticus 12:8) February 2 is 40 days after Christmas since at least 350 AD, the church has celebrated the Presentation of our Lord at the temple.

This day would also become known as Candlemas, the Feast of Light. People brought candles to church to be blessed. They were lit, and the congregation processed through the church as they sang the Song of Simeon. This is still done in several European countries.

As time passed, superstitions began to creep in. It was believed that an overcast Candlemas meant that winter was coming to a close, whereas a sunlit Candlemas indicated six more weeks of winter. One of the German sayings for the season translates as "If Candlemas is mild and pure, winter will be long for sure." As Candlemas traditions and superstitions evolved, many people embraced the legend that if the sun shone on the second day of February, an animal would see its shadow and there would be at least six more weeks of winter. Hedgehogs, bears or badgers were watched in some European countries, but the German immigrants who settled in Pennsylvania found an abundance of groundhogs and late in the 19th century a few residents in Punxsutawney began celebrating the groundhog as weather prophet. That is how the Presentation of our Lord evolved into Groundhog Day. Today I would like to look past the groundhog and see Jesus as our Savior.

I. It is easy to miss Jesus among all confusion of this day.

It was that way when Jesus was presented at the temple. The temple must have been a busy place as parents presented their children to the Lord, and people came to pray and offer sacrifices and gifts. People were coming and going at the temple all of the time. There were probably dozens of parents who presented their children that day, but almost no one noticed that there was anything special about Jesus.

Today it is also easy to miss Jesus. Just as the temple was a busy place, our lives can be very busy too. We're busy with all kinds of things. Many people work long hours. We drive our kids all over the place. We have things that we need to watch on tv. Our phones are always making some kind of noise because of a call, email or text message. There are so many things, which are calling for attention in of our lives. Even Sunday mornings have become busy times. There was a time when Sunday morning was off limits to anything except church. Now it is looked at as the big hole,

which all kinds of groups are trying to fill, especially youth sports. There are so many things that are competing with our time to worship our Lord. . It's even hard to find Jesus in our most popular religious holidays anymore. Are you looking for Jesus or is He lost in so many other things in this world?

II. What a blessing it is when we recognize Jesus as our Savior.

Simeon was blessed to recognize Jesus that day. We know nothing about him, except for what our text says. It says that he was a righteous and devout man, who was waiting for the Savior. His eyes had been in the right place. He knew the Scriptures, which had promised a Savior who would save us from all of our sins. He looked forward to the coming of the Savior with eager expectation.

God gave him a special gift. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he would not die until He saw the Savior with his own eyes. Then one day the Spirit moved him to go to the temple courts, and he knew that this was the Child. He took the Christ Child in his arms and began to praise God with the words, *“Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation.”* He was blessed to have seen the Savior with his own eyes. At that very moment a prophetess by the name of Anna came to them and gave thanks to God. She spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Israel. With all that was going on at the temple, these two people were given the eyes to see that Jesus was their Savior. He was the one whom God had promised, and whose coming they had looked forward to.

We are blessed when we recognize Him as our Savior too. We hear that good news that the Savior was born for us. He gave His life in our place on the cross. He bore our sins, so we can be clothed in His righteousness. He rose from the dead, so we will live also. Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit also directs us to Jesus Christ as our Savior. He is the greatest treasure of all because He takes away our sins, makes us into God's beloved children, and promises us the gift of eternal life. Jesus is the proof that God is for us and that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God, which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

One day we will behold Him in all of His glory. When we die, God's angels will bring our souls to God's glory in heaven where we will see our Savior. When the Lord raises us on the last day, we will rise to see our Savior with our own eyes. We will not hold our Savior with our hands as Simeon did, but we will see Him in the glory that He will give to us for all of eternity. There will be no greater sight for us, than to see Christ in His eternal temple. It will even be greater than when Simeon saw our Lord in His temple on earth.

So, today, on Groundhog Day, you can watch Punxsutawney Phil make his prediction and with a little hope that he doesn't see his shadow. But look beyond the Groundhog and you will see a special day in which Jesus was presented at the temple and declared to be the light of the world. May God's Spirit give us those eyes to see Christ as our Savior now by faith, that we may behold Him as our Savior in His eternal glory in heaven.

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