Glory Glory Alleluia

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. During the Civil War there were a variety of songs that the soldiers on either side would sing. Actually there was a boom of patriotic music during this period that wouldn’t be matched until the Second World War. There were lesser known songs written like *The Bonnie Blue Flag, Here’s Your Mule, All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight,* and *Marching Through Georgia*. These of course are not the best known songs of that era as songs like *Battle Cry of Freedom, Dixie,* and *Battle Hymn of the Republic* are still known even today. It’s the last song, Battle Hymn of the Republic, that I would like to take a look at. Now when I was younger, and far more immature than I am now, we used to sing “I know a song that gets on everybody’s nerves” to the same tune on the bus. It was all fun and games until the principal got on the bus and threatened to take recess away because we were being too distracting to our driver. All of that aside I thought that the lyrics of this song fit wonderfully well with our text for today. In our text Jesus is brought into the temple so that his parents could keep the law and make a sacrifice to God. Now imagine that you’re Mary or Joseph, and as you’re completing your task two people that you don’t know come up to you and one is “in the Spirit”. Now we know the context of Simeon being “in the Spirit” but if someone said that to me I would certainly have my own reservations about handing my child over to that person. However I’m certain that given all the things that Mary and Joseph had seen and witnessed to that point, I’m sure that this was probably not too surprising.

Simeon’s words are amazing. So amazing in fact that we sing them ourselves, but I’ll get to that in a moment. “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;” Martin Luther had an interesting comment about how we should prepare for death, because that is exactly what Simeon is talking about in this instance. Martin Luther believed that a Christian should prepare for death as one prepares to go to sleep. Simeon here is prepared for a peaceful departure because, as a righteous and devout man, he was very concerned about whether or not God would keep his promise to send a Savior to Israel. But now, “For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.” But I want you to think of his words as the opening line of the aforementioned Battle Hymn of the Republic, “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.” That is what Simeon held in his arms. The glory of the Lord. Certainly there was some expectation amongst the people that this glory would come down to free Israel from their Roman oppressors. Certainly when people thought of the glory of the Lord, they did not think it to be a humble child, coming with his parents to the temple to keep the law.

In our own lives we feel as though God is going to give us some glorious answer to our prayers or suddenly our path in life will straighten up and be illumined for us. Often times, especially when we’re stressed, we feel as though God doesn’t hear us. How many times have we wondered when the end to our suffering would come? The answer is all the time. Whether we know it or not. Because sometimes we do not understand that God says no to us. He says, “be patient just a little while.” Certainly Simeon felt impatient. Simeon, a man who was righteous and devout, had to be wondering in his old age, when God would answer his pleas to send deliverance. The one thing that we have a hard time grasping it isn’t up to us when God acts. Sometimes we need a little dose of Job. We need to be put in our place with some authority. But sometimes we need to trust. I’m certain that as a righteous and devout man Simeon trusted that he would see God’s deliverance before his death. He certainly believed that God would keep his promise to show him the face of salvation. I don’t think that the Battle Hymn of the Republic is meant to be a religious hymn but who is to say that Simeon didn’t sing Glory Glory alleluia after his encounter with Jesus?

So where do we fall into this story of Simeon? What does this story speak to us? Well the truth is that we see the glory of the coming of the Lord in this very place. When we speak of God’s presence sometimes we say that as though it’s simply God’s awareness. God is aware that his people come together to worship him and thus he is present. That is so far from actuality and such speaking diminishes the relationship that God has with his people. Have you ever wondered why we say grace? Other than to bless the food that we are about to eat, we say grace in order to invite God to our table in the same manner he invites us to his. God wants to be with his people. When we come together on Sunday morning our eyes behold the glory of the coming of the Lord. While it may not come with trumpets or chariots or legions of angels, he comes through much humbler means. The reason that we sing the song of Simeon, what we call the offertory, is the same as why Simeon said those words in the first place. Allow me to paraphrase a little bit. Lord you are letting us, your servants depart in peace according to your own words of forgiveness. For our eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared for your people through your holy word and precious sacraments which they partake of here in your house. This is forgiveness, a light that is for all people. That is what we sing. Our eyes behold the glory of the Lord every time we are gathered together in his name. We are witnesses to the glory of his forgiveness, which he gives to us daily. We are witnesses to the great things that he does in our lives and has done for the human race. Our faith teaches us that one day we will behold the glory of the Lord in its fullness. On that day there will be no humble means of being with his people, but rather we will be brought to him, wearing dazzling white robes washed clean by the blood of Christ. While we have to wait to see that day, we trust and know that it is coming when we can sing out the chorus of Glory Glory Alleluia. But until that day, his truth keeps marching on here in this place, God’s house. Amen. Now may the peace of God which surpasses our understanding keep and guard your hearts and minds now and forever. Amen.