

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, September 8, 2020
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“SIGNS TO BE SPOKEN AGAINST”

READING: Luke 2:28-35 – Simeon took (Jesus) in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light to reveal you to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

I used to love the color orange. It was one of my favorites in childhood and one of our team colors at Vassar High (“Orange and black, fight! Fight!”). I loved big, sweet Navel oranges, orange Nehi, orange suckers, orange Popsicles, orange jelly slices, orange trucks, orange shirts, orange hunting clothes, etc. etc. No more! I am sick of orange! I don’t want to see anything orange for the next five months! I’m even thinking of buying only white pumpkins for Halloween!

Why, Pastor? you might ask. What has caused you to turn against the color orange? Well, I’ll tell you: orange signs that say, “ROAD CONSTRUCTION AHEAD 2 MILES”!!! I am sick, sick, sick, of orange road construction signs, and while we’re at it, I’m sick of orange barrels, orange cones, orange poles, orange vests, and most everything else associated with construction zones.

Now, I know: all that construction is necessary to keep our streets, roads, and highways safe and drivable. I know that, but with Blackiston Mill under construction and Slate Run under construction and I-265 being repaved and Grant Line earlier this summer, not to mention every single bridge in Indiana along I-69 and the work on I-65 and nearly the entire stretch of I-64 through the state of West Virginia, I AM SICK OF ORANGE SIGNS! I am speaking against those signs, revealing the thoughts of my heart.

Well, now you may have seen where I am headed with this! Simeon was moved to praise God when he held the infant Jesus in his arms. He was moved to bless Joseph and Mary. But he also warned Mary that not everyone would be as joyful at His coming as was Simeon. In fact, he tells her that, “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.”

This prophecy was fulfilled many, many times during the earthly ministry of Jesus. The Pharisees spoke against him saying, “This man eats with sinners!” The elders spoke against him saying, “He does these things by the power of Beelzebub!” The chief priests spoke

against him saying, "By what authority do you do these things?" Caiaphas, the High Priest spoke against him saying, "Why do we need any more witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy!" And, the Sanhedrin and their lackeys spoke against him saying, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Even Peter spoke against him saying, "I don't know the man!"

Jesus was a sign to be spoken against because he didn't fit their mold. Most of the Jews were looking for a warrior king, a "Son of David" who would reclaim David's throne, restore the kingdom, and drive out their Roman overseers. Jesus wasn't remotely interested in such an earthly kingdom. His was a far greater cause, a broader mission: to give himself as the ransom for many and to call to repentance and salvation not only the people of Israel, but the Gentiles as well. This was unacceptable, even unthinkable, for the powerful in Jerusalem, so they spoke against Jesus. They did all within their power to take him down and silence him. And, finally they achieved their ultimate goal by speaking against him before Pilate, who acquiesced to their demands and sent Jesus to the Cross. Little did they know that at that very moment God's gracious plan for the salvation of the world was being worked out as he had ordained it!

Soon the orange stuff will be stacked and stashed away for the winter season when construction takes a break. For a few months we'll be able to drive without hinderance and delay. But, when the spring comes and the sun warms up the roads, the "orange flowers" will bloom again, and once more you'll probably hear me speaking against those orange signs. Thanks be to God that the sign of his love for us, the sign of his justice, the sign of his mercy and grace did not falter nor fail when he was spoken against. Jesus kept his eye on the prize and gained for us forgiveness of our sins and eternal life in his name. That's a sign that points our way to heaven. In Jesus' name, amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

Saturday, September 19, 5:00 – we are planning a drive-in worship service in place of the usual Saturday night service. You'll be able to park in the lot, see the pastors from your car, and tune in to the service on your FM dial. At the end of the service, Holy Communion will be celebrated and distributed as you drive out the exit past the gym. In this way we hope to give those who have stayed out of the building for five months for fear of COVID the opportunity to safely and meaningfully worship AND RECEIVE COMMUNION. More info will be coming, so stay tuned!

We would once again put out a plea for those who are "techies" to consider volunteering to learn from Ryan Dietrich the process by which we broadcast our service on the Internet. Ryan has been most diligent in being there for two service over and over these last five months. But it's time we had some people who could spell him. Let us know if you're interested.