**“According to the Law”**

Psalm 84

1 Samuel 1:21-28

Hebrews 2:14-18

Luke 2:22-32 (33-40)

 Presentation of Our Lord

The text that concludes our Gospel reading, not in our bulletin insert, but **explaining this account**. “Jesus’ father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is **appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also)**, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.’

“And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. **She** did not depart from the temple, **worshiping** with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to **give thanks to God** and to **speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem**.

“And when they had **performed everything according to the Law of the Lord**, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

The reason for this remembrance of Jesus’ Presentation in the Temple goes back to the **Passover event**. Because God **saved firstborns among believers obedient to His gracious instructions**, He then told the people through Moses to **remember that** by returning what’s first-from-us to Him, “not delaying to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The **firstborn of your sons** you shall **give to Me**. **Consecrate to Me** all the firstborn. Whatever is the **first** to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is **Mine**,” God said.

It was on the night of the killing of the firstborn of **unbelievers** **(both men and their beasts)**, but protecting the firstborn of **believers (men with their beasts covered under the mantle of the blood of Hope)**, that **consecration for God** set aside Gospel-recipients from those who refused it. A **purification and presentation** to God **as what and who we know we’re supposed to be** gets submitted-to, which **prepares-us** to engage our salvation with all its duties.

So today (smack in the middle of the Divine Revelation of God’s deliverance of people through His firstborn Son, as in the Epiphany Season of **that**), we take a break to be reminded of **His (God’s firstborn Son’s) willfulness** in submitting to that **saving and consecrating (purifying) of us work** **…** **FULFILLING THAT DUTY SO THAT WE COULD BE RETURNED / CONSECRATED-BACK, PURIFIED TO HIS FATHER**.

**Text**

And God’s laws **demanding** humanity’s **consecration** and **purification** are as **historic** and as **necessary** as Adam and Eve’s **fall** in the Garden of Eden **made them to be**. “We heard the sound of You, God, in the garden, and were afraid, because we were naked, so we hid ourselves.” “The Lord God had **told them** **(commanded them)** saying ‘You may eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good **and evil** you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’ He’d said that to Adam as law demanding that mankind stay just **in the Gospel**. ‘The woman whom You gave me to be with me, Lord, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’ So God said, ‘woman, I will multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain (and in bloodshed) you shall bring forth children.’ ‘You (all of you from now on) are dust (since from out of it you were taken), and so to dust you **shall return**.’” **Death** is the evil they chose for us, and it was hard to miss how that struck this week, with the sudden fact of it doled from a helicopter loaded with children and parents, even those in prime physical shape couldn’t escape the termination of life that Kobe Bryant and others-with-him were (just before that) so full of. Many, from presidents through to Jack Nicholson, expressed hope that God would receive these people into Heaven, and I wondered how many paused to consider how **necessity** it was that everyone in that helicopter accident was prepared for that (as in consecrated and purified by God, so **His and taken to Him** last Sunday.

For that, Kobe and his daughter Gianna, her team-mates, their parents, and a pilot, were beholden to a consecration and purification into the 40-day-old baby who, Himself, submitted to the law of that, presented Himself for an offering-of-sacrifice for it. Jesus (the baby) was Hope for every famous or not-so-famous person who’s died and is destined to. He (that baby) was the bloodshed of the Passover that’s preparedness and safety (salvation) for any covered-over-by-it … and staying that way.

Today we remember and enjoy (participate with) **that Passover by, also, consuming-of**-**it** **through bread and wine**, and if we get into a helicopter and not return to the ground safe, then baptized (consecrated, purified, and fed (believing) security’s ours to die in peace. My prayer is that everyone dying this past week was prepared and ready, consecrated and purified (known) and kept that way by the Lord until the end of their earthly life. My prayer for everyone still yet preserved into this coming week is the same. But **according to the Law of Adam and Eve’s choice in their fall**, we all die and must be saved from the worst part of that.

Yet there is mercy and salvation (grace) that’s according to the **Law of a sacrificial Holy death**, and a consecration and purification into that by and in Him. Jesus’ Passover blood got shed for us and (in baptism among believers) it covers-over us and protects us (saves us), so that death’s **eternal potential** **passes-over** our doorposts-of-our-flesh and soul. **Jesus** was Presented to His Father at the Temple to **submit to** **both the Law of bloodshed and death for sin as well as the Law of mercy and salvation (grace) by His death to substitute-for and satisfy our destinies of eternal death**.

Simeon (from the Gospel reading) was called a “righteous and devout” man, “waiting for the consolation of Israel”. In other words, he awaited the **Remedy for the Law of death for sin** in the **Law of sins acceptable sacrifice**. He knew that the baby presented was that Remedy (He was miraculously told that) and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is **appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also)**, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed”. The only question from that sacrificial “sword piercing” of the cross is will the thoughts of people’s hearts be revealed consecrated and purified and concerned with that in light? Anna (in the Gospel account) was one who **WAS** “**waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem**”. And Hebrews (reflecting after the fact on what **this** **Presented-baby did**) called Him the “merciful and faithful **High Priest in the service of God**, **making** **propitiation for the sins of the people**” (as in **being** the Passover blood that saves by protecting those consecrated by it from eternal death).

**Application**

The **good news** about, at least, Kobe Bryant and (most probably) his daughter Gianna is that (reportedly) the family was devoutly Catholic (**he’d**, at least, been over for prayers before Mass the morning of the crash). What I know about Catholicism is that **the consecration and purifying presentation of humanity to grace is done in baptism** and then **taught-of** as what’s to be religiously stayed-in as graciousness from God, a regular gift from submission and reception of it in Word and bread and wine in the Temple of God’s Church so I praise God for that news that I was told, and for **graciously grabbing these two as His own (brought to Heaven)**. I’m thrilled for **their consecration and purification by God by baptism and faith (their Presentation to the Temple that way by water and Promise and the hearing of His Word**.

“Lord, now let **us Your servants (consecrated, purified, and believing)**, when it’s our time depart in peace, according to Your word; for **our eyes have also seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples (it’s the Gospel we’ve heard and received)**, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel.”

In His name, +Jesus. Amen.