

Looking for Christmas Comfort! 1. Salvation is revealed
2. Peace is restored

Luke 2:25-40

Introduction - It's the Sunday after Christmas. The presents are unwrapped, the tree has lost most of its needles. The left overs aren't tasting nearly as good anymore. How are you holding up? For some, Christmas is an emotional, heavy time of the year. Maybe you saw too much family, maybe not at all this year. Maybe it was busier than ever and you feel like you haven't had a chance to relax. Yet you have come here today. Maybe you're looking for some post-Christmas comfort?

Simeon in our sermon text for today was too, so he went to the temple.

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.

Simeon was an Old Testament believer who was looking for the consolation of Israel, waiting for Israel to be comforted. All his life he was waiting for the comfort of a promised Savior. The Comforter himself, the Holy Spirit, tells him to go the temple - today you will see him!

What was Simeon looking for? A rabbi, a leader, a hero? Then they walked in. A young peasant couple with a baby. In the Old Testament law, God said that each first born child should be dedicated to the Lord, and they were to make a sacrifice - to say, "Lord this is your child." (and of course, he was). This poor couple couldn't afford a lamb but they had two birds with them to offer. Most paid them no attention. Only through the eyes of faith, faith given to him by the Spirit, can Simeon see his Savior in this child. The Bible says: *When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God.*

This man, this stranger, he doesn't look at the baby and say, "Oh how cute. He has his mother's eyes. What a strong little guy!" No he lifts this child up and praises 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 for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."* He doesn't just see a baby. He sees the light of the world. He sees salvation. He sees God with his own eyes. Through faith he sees this child who holds his finger, reaching in and rescuing him from sin and death. This one who couldn't even talk yet is the one who created the world with his word. Now he had come to rescue it.

Christmas comfort came to Jerusalem because salvation was revealed!

Our comfort comes from the same place. Last week we pondered a miracle. God made flesh. The first miracle of Christmas is that Christ came. Who am I that God should come down? That he should stoop so low? I have nothing to offer him, nothing to set myself apart, nothing except for a pitiful existence and a desperate need for a Savior. Yet he came.

But take a moment now to ponder a second Christmas miracle. God in his grace reveals his Son to me, to you. He worked out all things in my life so that I could be here today, actually believing this beautiful Christmas message. That's a miracle, for me and you. Stop and think for a moment - what would your life be like if Christ had not been revealed to you? But would it... be... that different? Really? A little more free time on a Sunday morning maybe. But is your life so wrapped up in Christ that you would feel empty without him? Or does your life get wrapped up in you, like my life gets so wrapped up in ... me? Even as Christians we fall into the old way of thinking, looking to ourselves for comfort instead of Christ. Focusing on the things of the holiday instead of the meaning of the holiday? Is that why we feel empty after a holiday like Christmas, because we looked for comfort and refreshment somewhere other than Christ? We're not worthy of either Christmas miracle. Yet he came. Yet he revealed himself to me.

The Holy Spirit spoke to Simeon and told him that he would reveal Christ. Also for us, the Holy Spirit reveals himself in his Word, even through our children, as they recite the Christmas story. We are revealers too - raising children, showing them that baby in the manger, this child in the temple and saying, "He came because he loves you sweetie." Pointing out that same truth to a friend who is struggling - he came because he loves you." Simeon saw a baby enter the temple and he rejoiced. We also rejoice when a baby or an adult enters the church, and the Lord reveals his salvation in baptism. We also sing Simeon's song on many communion Sundays, because there we taste and see the salvation that God has prepared for us.

Transition: Think about that Song of Simeon again. It's so beautiful. Call me a nerd, but I used to drive down the interstate in my old Honda Accord on my way home from work, windows open, because the AC didn't work, just belting that song out the window. "Lord now let your servant depart in peace." I love it! That's comfort for me, that's peace, and a rockin liturgical melody. But notice that it doesn't include the side conversation that Simeon has with Mary and Joseph next. That comes in a different tone, a hushed whisper, an ominous prophetic statement.

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,* ³⁵ *so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.*" Mary, get ready, because his life will not be easy, and neither will yours. Mothers - Is this the message you want to hear about your newborn? People will be for him or against him, with terrible consequences if they do not believe. He will be hated and opposed. Within the next couple years, he would already begin King Herod, fearful of this newborn king, will issue a command to have all the boys in the Bethlehem area, 2 years old and under, killed. How can you sing of peace Simeon??

And look at the suffering that this young mother will face. Simeon describes it as a sword, piercing her very soul. Does she understand what this child will grow up to do? Does she understand why he came? What does Simeon mean?

But then a woman interrupts - a prophetess, an elderly woman who spoke the very words of God. The Bible mentions a number of women like this. She had given her life to service in the temple. *There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,* ³⁷ *and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.* ³⁸ *Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*

By faith, she too sees things clearly. She looks at this child and sees the Redeemer, the redemption of Jerusalem. Picture "redemption" as "buying someone back." In sin we have all run away from God and have decided to serve sin instead, and we became slaves. The Bible describes all people as naturally dead in sin, blind, and hostile. But Anna sees this baby as the one who will buy back the world from their slavery, who will present us to God as pure and holy. She was waiting and praying day and night, and now she saw him! She praises God and spreads the news.

For Anna it brought joy, for Mary and Joseph- fear maybe, confusion, wonder? Also look back to Simeon. This child brings - peace. Knowing what he knows- the piercing pain, the opposition ahead, he still says to God. "I have watched for the coming of the Christ. He has come, all just as you promised. My work is done. My life is full. I have peace. Dismiss your servant."

His prayer is our prayer. Simeon saw a glimpse of the redemption. He saw that Mary's soul would be pierced - TOO. Which meant he also knew that this child would be pierced. The Holy Spirit revealed it. Maybe directly, maybe through his study of David or Isaiah. This Jesus will redeem us by paying a costly price. His holy precious blood - as he is pierced by the nails that would pin him to the cross, as a spear entered his side, proving that he died. Our sin deserved punishment, and Jesus would pay what we owed on the cross.

However, as you look into the concept of redemption, we see that we need a very specific redeemer. He had to be a person, just like us, but with no sin of his own. And even at this early age, we see that that is exactly the Redeemer that Jesus is! Check out verse 39 and 40 - ³⁹ *When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.* ⁴⁰ *And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.*

It seems like just another summary statement, but see already Jesus' parents doing "everything required by the Law of the Lord." Jesus is keeping God's law perfectly, for you, as a 40 day old child. And don't miss this last verse, so simple, he grew in body and mind. Just like every kid does. And that's the point. This Child is your brother, true man and true God, to give you salvation and peace.

Christmas comfort in Christ. My prayer for you is that the Song of Simeon becomes your song. You probably won't practice your opera voice through the car window on the way to work, but find comfort in its message. Let your servant depart in peace. Maybe it's peace as you depart from church today and jump into another week on Monday. Maybe it's peace as you move from 2014 into a new year. Maybe it's peace toward the end of life, knowing we get to see Jesus. Comfort comes from knowing Christ. And we do! "Let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation!" Amen.

And the peace of God that transcends all understand will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.