

December 28, 2008
Christmas 1

"Simeon's Perfect Peace in Jesus"

LUKE 2:25-32

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. 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, saying: ²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

This past week my niece in Arizona had a little baby girl, her first child, born on December 23. They were able to bring her home from the hospital for Christmas Eve. Her baby came later than expected, so we kept asking, "Did, Erin have her baby yet?" There is the joy of anticipating the birth that includes setting up the nursery, having baby showers, and getting things ready for the big day. Then there is the greater joy of actually holding the baby in your arms after it is born.

Today in the Word of the Lord that is before us we see an elderly man named Simeon eagerly anticipating the birth of a baby, the promised Messiah. His anticipation had been heightened because it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he saw his Savior, his Messiah. His peace and joy were complete when this elderly man was finally able to hold Jesus in his arms and see in him the hope of salvation for himself and the whole world.

As we prepare to close another year and enter a new year, we do so with a certain amount of expectation and anticipation. Maybe this will be the year that Jesus returns and we will no longer have to deal with the problems and challenges of life that confront us on a daily basis. This anticipation and hope brings peace into our lives. There is also the greater peace of actually having Jesus in our lives as we receive him in faith and also have the privilege of taking his body and blood in the Holy Sacrament. That brings us great comfort and peace every day, and prepares us for every challenge in life including the possibility of facing our death.

The peace of knowing that Jesus is coming

There is a real peace and comfort that comes with knowing Jesus is coming again in glory, similar to the peace and comfort Simeon had when he was told that Jesus was coming into the world for the first time. We are told, "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." No much is told us about this man named Simeon. Was he married? Did he have a large family? Was he a pillar in the community, or someone hardly

known? Did he make his living by tending sheep, or was he a merchant on the streets of Jerusalem? We are told only the essentials about this man. He was righteous and devout. The word devout has the thought of taking something carefully in our hands, the way we might hold a new born baby. That is how this man was with the word of the Lord and his worship in the temple. He loved to be in the temple of the Lord and he loved to live a righteous life in the community.

Psalm 84 says, "How lovely is your dwelling place O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." Some of our best moments in life are spent being close to the Lord in worship and Holy Communion. Some of our best moments will be those when we open God's Word and read it and grow in it. Psalm 1 says of the person who is in the Word, "He will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, which yields its fruit season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." That's what I am hoping to see more of in my life in this coming year, and I am sure you feel the same about your life as well.

Simeon lived each day with the hope that he might see the Messiah before he died. He was looking forward to "The consolation in Israel." There are 268 names for the Lord in the Bible. Here is one of the names for the Lord, "The consolation in Israel." This word for consolation is the same word used to describe the Holy Spirit as our counselor or comforter. No one brings you greater peace and joy in your life every day than Jesus. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me..." Following Jesus means climbing up the mountains with him to pleasant green pastures, and lying down near quiet cool waters. Listening to the voice of your shepherd and following him means that his rod and staff will always be there to comfort you. He is the consolation in Israel.

Simeon was privileged to have the Holy Spirit on him. In fact the Holy Spirit gave him a special message that he would not see death until he actually saw the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord's Christ, with his own eyes.

You have the Holy Spirit in your life. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith and leads us to trust in Jesus our Savior. It is also the Holy Spirit who comforts us by keeping our hope alive that Jesus could return anytime, even before this year comes to an end. Romans 8 describes how the Holy Spirit leads us to groan inwardly for the Lord to return. "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Have you ever sat next to someone and heard their stomach growl? Sit next to a Christian and you will hear them groaning inwardly for Jesus to come soon. Even so Lord Jesus, come soon, come quickly.

It says that Simeon looked forward to the Lord's Christ. That's an interesting way to speak about Jesus, is it not? The Lord's Christ. The word Christ means the Messiah, the anointed one. It means that Jesus was perfectly chosen by the Father to do the job of saving us, and getting the job done right. If you need your plumbing fixed you call a plumber. If you need to rewire your garage you call an electrician. If you need your car repaired you call an auto mechanic. If you want to be saved, then you need to look at whom God the Father has chosen to get the job done. He did not leave our hope of being rescued from our sin in our hands because God our Father knows that we cannot bail ourselves out of one single sin. Even our best attempts to do better, only add to deepening the debt. That is why from all eternity it was God's plan to have his Son Jesus function as the Christ, the one to get

the job done right. We know Jesus did it right because when he finished his work of paying for every sin placed on him, he cried out from the cross, "It is finished!" We know the job was done right because the Father raised his Son back to life again.

Every day we live on this earth we can eagerly anticipate that Jesus may come again in glory, just as Simeon looked forward to Jesus coming for the first time. The Holy Spirit speaks to us and tells us that all the signs have been fulfilled. The Holy Spirit also helps us see that Jesus is the Christ, the one who did the job and did it right. I once had a nasty dent in one of my cars. I thought of trying to fix it on my own. Instead I took it to a hole in the wall repair place in the boonies off Blosser Road. The end product was a car that was so carefully fixed and painted that you could not tell there had been a dent in that car. Every day of life on this earth is lived knowing Jesus did the job right for my salvation and cost me nothing but cost him everything. Every day Jesus pleads for me before his Father's throne and asks my Father to look at the perfect sacrifice He gave as the Lord's Christ as my hope of being saved. Romans 8 says, "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died- more than that, who was raised to life- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

The peace of knowing Jesus is here

Simeon, the man who waited for Jesus, had the very special peace that comes with holding Jesus in his aged arms. "Moved by the Spirit, Simeon went into the temple courts. When the parents brought the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God." Imagine the joy and the peace that came into his life when he woke up one morning and the Holy Spirit spoke to him and said, "Simeon you need to be in the temple today." And there was even the greater joy when he did enter the temple, and the Holy Spirit led him to a tiny baby and told him that this was his Savior.

It says that Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms. Jesus is a little over a month old. Remember the first time someone let you hold a little baby in your arms. Or maybe it was your first born child, and you so carefully held that baby, cradled its head, held it close to you. Simeon held Jesus, looked at him and believed he was the consolation of Israel, the Lord's Christ, the salvation of the world, the Son of God. He bursts forth in this beautiful song of praise, "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."

Simeon is ready to depart in peace and leave this world, because the promise was fulfilled. He was given the privilege of seeing Jesus with his own eyes and holding him in his arms. He speaks of Jesus as his salvation, the hope of Israel, and even light for the Gentiles. Think of how many people this past week worshipped in churches throughout the world and saw Jesus as their light of salvation. This elderly man, this aged Seer, was given the eyes of faith to see what we see happening in these last days in which we are living. We see Jesus the Savior, the light of the world, shining brightly in homes and hearts all over the world, people believing a tiny baby who is their Lord and God and Savior.

How significant and fitting that we often sing these words of this elderly man after taking

the body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion. Just as Simeon held the Christ child in his arms, we take the very body and blood of Jesus, the Lord's Christ, in our mouths with the bread and the wine. After receiving the body and blood of Jesus we can depart in peace, knowing all is well between us and our God in this life and for all eternity. That is the perfect peace this world cannot give, perfect peace that we cannot find in ourselves, but is always there for us in Jesus.

"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." Amen.