

December 28, 2014
Christmas 1

"Another Year for the Holy Spirit to Help Us See 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."

Think of all the blessings the Lord has given to you this past year. Psalm 103 says, "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." This past year our choir sang the song, "10,000 Reasons" with the words "10,000 reasons for my heart to find" to praise the Lord. 10,000 reasons to praise the Lord? That is probably a low estimate.

On this last worship day of the year 2014 we would have you think about how many times the Holy Spirit led you to see the blessings you have in Jesus your Savior. It was the Holy Spirit who led Simeon to take the baby Jesus in his arms and embrace him as his Lord and God and Savior. It is the Holy Spirit that has led you to embrace Jesus in faith much more than 10,000 times this past year. If the world does not come to an end this coming year, you can be sure that the Holy Spirit will help you embrace Jesus with the arms of faith over and over and over again in the year that lies before us.

The Holy Spirit leads us to Jesus

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." We miss the words in the King James Version that say, "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon." Mary and Joseph are presenting the Baby Jesus in the temple with a special offering of a turtle dove. As this is happening, behold, a man named Simeon suddenly appears on the scene and takes the baby Jesus into his arms. This was not something that happened by chance or by accident. It was carefully planned by God. Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit to put his arms around Jesus.

No much is told us about this man named Simeon. Was he married? Did he have a family? Did he make his living by tending sheep, or was he a prosperous business man 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 and treasuring it. 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. He treasured the blessings he

had in the Lord. The lambs he saw sacrificed in the temple pointed him to the blood of the Messiah who would atone for his sin. He was righteous before God not because of his performance, but because God's favor was earned for him through the righteousness of the coming Savior.

Behold! Look! this man Simeon and recall how blessed you were this past year to enjoy being with God's people in worship as Simeon was. 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 come when we open God's Word and read it and grow in it. Psalm 1 says, "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 was waiting for the "consolation in Israel" and the Holy Spirit was upon him. There are close to 300 names for the Lord in the Bible. This name "consolation in Israel" 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.

The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon in a special way. "It was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ." God does speak to certain people directly. He spoke to Joseph and told him to take Mary as his wife and also warned him to get out of Bethlehem and escape from King Herod. The Lord spoke to the wise men through a star and led them to Bethlehem. The Lord spoke to people and had the Scriptures written down. "Holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Simeon was privileged to have the Holy Spirit tell him directly that he would not die until his eyes personally saw the Lord's Christ, the Messiah.

Although the Holy Spirit has not spoken directly to you as he has spoken to Simeon, he does constantly work very actively in your life to bring you closer to Jesus your Savior and Messiah. Listen to this amazing prayer in Ephesians 3 where Paul prays, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Thousands upon thousands of times the Holy Spirit has convicted us of sin this past year. Thousands upon thousands of times the Holy Spirit has led us to see Jesus in all his glory as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The wonderful Holy Spirit told Simeon he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Yes, Jesus is the Lord's Christ. He is the anointed one. He is the Christ. He is

the one appointed to get the job done of saving us of our sin and getting the job done right. Read Isaiah 59 and see how desperately we need the Messiah to do the job for us. "So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness;.. like the blind we grope along the wall...For our offenses are many in your sight." Then it says in Isaiah 59, the Lord saw that there was no one to intervene so his right arm worked salvation for him.

To illustrate how Jesus is just the right person to get the job done right permit a story about an old car that ran well but had an ugly dent in the rear panel. We took it to a well know body shop. They wanted a large amount of money to fix the dent, almost more than the car was worth. Then we found Rodrigo who repaired it for one third the cost. When it was finished you could not tell where the dent was. Jesus did more than just repair the sins in your life. He is the Christ, the one who removed them. Think of how often the Holy Spirit helped you remember the words of Jesus from the cross, "It is finished."

The Holy Spirit helps us put our arms around Jesus

Now we see the Holy Spirit leading Simeon directly to Jesus. "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 said to him: "Simeon you need to be in the temple today." Simeon goes to the temple led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit directs him to Jesus and he takes the baby Jesus in his arms. What joy was his as he held this baby in his arms and believed he was his Lord and God from all eternity and the Savior who was promised.

Simeon 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. He wants to be released from this life and go home to be with the Lord. We are reminded of the Apostle Paul who said, "I long to be absent from this body and present with the Lord."

We end an old year this week and begin a new year knowing we are at peace with God through the Savior that Simeon held in his arms. We have the ultimate peace of knowing we belong to the Lord whatever the future may bring. Romans 14 assures us that "Whether we live we live unto the Lord and whether we die we die unto the Lord, whether we live or die we belong to the Lord."

Jesus is the glory of the people of Israel. He was born in that land. He walked throughout that land living the perfect life we could never live. He died in that land for my sins and yours. He rose from the dead in that land. That is the glory of Israel. That is a light for the Gentiles that reaches throughout the world. In awe and amazement the Apostle John says, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the Only Begotten who came from the father full of grace and truth."

How many times has the Holy Spirit led you to join other Christians throughout the world to embrace and behold Jesus as the only begotten from the Father full of grace and truth.

You can purchase a sports watch that will tell you how many steps you take each day. What if we had a watch that also recorded for us how many times the Holy Spirit leads us to embrace Jesus in child like faith and trust? Last year was good year for the Holy Spirit to help us see Jesus. And we confidently trust that as we draw closer to Jesus return the year 2015 will be even be better. Amen.