

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church

Our Waiting Is Over

Luke 2:25-40

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 on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 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 may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."

³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ 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."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, 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.

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 on him.

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel ..." (Lk 2:25).

Waiting. There's something we don't like to do. Wait in lines. Wait for the doctor. Wait for the cable guy. Waiting is a waste of time. We don't like it.

We don't know if Simeon liked it either. We don't really know anything about him other than he was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (2:25). We don't know what tribe he was from, who his mother and father were, or where he grew up. We don't know his occupation, whether he was married, or even how old he was. All we know is that he was waiting, for, "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah" (2:26).

If we can assume he waiting wasn't pleasant for him either, then we can also assume his excitement the joy that must have filled his soul when his wait was finally over! When he finally receives his Christmas present! The baby Jesus, the Consolation of Israel. The one who is the long-awaited Redeemer, promised by God already in the Garden of Eden, spoken of by the prophets. The wait for Simeon was over and he is ready for the Lord to "to dismiss [his] servant in peace" (Lk 2:29). In other words, he is ready to die.

But Simeon does one more thing – he unwraps his present, so to speak. He "unwraps" the meaning of this child and what he will do and the effect he will have on the world. "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 piece your own soul too" (Lk 2:34-35).

Which seems a little like finding a lump of coal in your stocking on Christmas morning, doesn't it? Simeon finally gets his present. He is filled with joy. He unwraps the child to find not only good things like "salvation" and "light" and "revelation" and "glory" (Lk 2:29-32), but also opposition and sadness and the exposing of the shocking truth of many hearts and the piercing of Mary's very soul.

But seemingly before any one can say, ‘Wait. What?’ Simeon disappears into the background. And even though we do not see or hear from him again, we know what he meant.

- We know Christ is the light of the world but at the same time his light hurts eyes used to the darkness of sin.
- We know Christ is the glory of God, but that glory was revealed in serving and sacrifice, lowliness and humility – the very things from which we recoil when asked to do ourselves.
- We know Christ is the revealer of what God is really like and what we are really like, and so he was and is opposed because no one likes their sin exposed or point out.
- We know Christ is this world’s salvation but is rejected because the self-righteous would prefer to think they can save themselves.
- And we know how Mary’s soul was pierced with sorrow as she watched the Son of God conceived in her brutally crucified.

We also know that the risen and ascended Jesus Christ continues to come to us as humbly and lowly as he did to Simeon. For what did he see that day other than a baby that looked like all the other forty-day-old Israelite babies being brought to the temple “to do for him what the custom of the Law required” (2:27)? And yet by a Holy Spirit worked faith he knew the baby being brought by Mary and Joseph was his Savior, the Redeemer of the world. And what do you see sitting on this altar other than bread and wine? What’s resting on this pulpit other than a book? What do you often find filling that font other than water? And yet by a Holy Spirit worked faith we know Jesus himself comes to us through these humble Means of Grace, and so our waiting is over too. Just like Simeon’s!

For what else could we possibly want and have to wait for?

- Acceptance by God? But he’s already accepted you through Baptism.
- To hear the voice of God speak to you? But that’s why he’s give you his Holy Word.
- To actually see and touch him in the flesh? Holy Communion.
- Forgiveness for what he’s exposed in our hearts too? Already forgiven fully and freely of all our sins!
- Eternal life? Even that we already possess in the new life he’s enabling us to live right now!

What else could we possibly be waiting for from God? The answer is nothing, God’s already given us everything we need. Our waiting is over, we hold our Christmas present in our hearts by faith.

All there’s left to do is rejoice! Like Simeon did! Unwrapping our Christmas present for all to see and hear what the Christ-child has done and the effect he has on the soul that repents and turns to him for salvation. For we are ready! Ready for him to make our joy complete by calling us home in peace!

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

M: Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming deliver us from the corruption of our sin and transform us into the likeness of his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Prayers of the Church

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief silence

Eternal Lord God, while your people of old had to wait for the consolation of Israel, you have given us everything in the coming of your Son, our Redeemer. Give us grace to rejoice in Christ's blessed incarnation, and grant us a glad new year.

O worthy Judge, from you proceeds the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Give wisdom to those who make, administer and judge our laws, that they may serve faithfully in their tasks, according to your good pleasure, for the benefit of your people.

Gracious Lord, receive our prayers for those who suffer from loneliness. Comfort them with the sure and certain knowledge that they will never be forsaken by you. Give them family and friends within the household of faith with whom they can find loving companionship.

Blessed Lord, help the sick and suffering, especially those who desire our prayers [_____]. Surround them with your love in Christ and, according to your gracious will, heal them.

Comfort all those who mourn [*especially...*]

- *the sister of Gerry Hammerschmidt, Janet Reinig, as her husband Fredrick was gathered to the Lord's side last week*
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Fill their hearts with the certain hope of the resurrection.

Father of lasting peace, show your mercy to those who receive the Lord's Supper this day, that they would behold their salvation in the very body and blood of Christ given for them and, with Simeon, be well-prepared to depart in peace according to your Word.

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Isaiah 45:20-25

²⁰ “Gather together and come;
assemble, you fugitives from the nations.
Ignorant are those who carry about idols of
wood,
who pray to gods that cannot save.
²¹ Declare what is to be, present it—
let them take counsel together.
Who foretold this long ago,
who declared it from the distant past?
Was it not I, the LORD?
And there is no God apart from me,
a righteous God and a Savior;
there is none but me.
²² “Turn to me and be saved,
all you ends of the earth;
for I am God, and there is no other.
²³ By myself I have sworn,
my mouth has uttered in all integrity
a word that will not be revoked:
Before me every knee will bow;
by me every tongue will swear.
²⁴ They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone
are deliverance and strength.’”
All who have raged against him
will come to him and be put to shame.
²⁵ But all the descendants of Israel
will find deliverance in the LORD
and will make their boast in him.

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