

Luke 2:25-32

Christmas 1; December 28th, 2014

He Comes to Bring Peace!

Sometimes exciting little things come in small packages, don't they, especially around Christmas time? A guy receives a gift card to Home Depot, soon-to-be grandparents get a picture of the first ultrasound, a young girl gets a small, felt-lined box with a small shiny new stone in it. Sometimes big things come in little packages.

As Mary and Joseph carried their little "package" into the temple 8 days after Jesus was born, there was nothing extraordinary about them. They were just carrying out what God's law had asked them to do. Thousands of parents had done the same thing before them. They were bringing Jesus to be circumcised. But it was also on that day that he received his name from his father – "Jesus." As Simeon saw Jesus, he saw something really BIG in him – **"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 saw that Jesus had come to bring peace!

Simeon had been waiting for this moment all his life. 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."** Not 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.

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."** I read that 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. This little child would walk along with the human race and bring comfort to it.

Simeon understood why this Savior needed to come. He had to come to bring salvation and peace to this world. He needed to come and comfort sinners like you and me! As the Apostle Paul would later write: **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** But God did not leave man alone in his sin. In his arms, Simeon now held this Savior.

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. God 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.

He knew that this child, that he held in his arms, would take care of everything that made death so terrible. For there is only one thing in the final analysis that makes dying something to be feared. That is sin. If we could really be sure that after the pain of dying, there would be endless joy; if we could really be sure that the punishment for sin has been all taken care of and the Judge will not find us guilty, when we stand before the judgment seat of God; If we could really be sure that we would once again see our loved one; Why then, dying wouldn't be all that bad. Then we also could say with Simeon: **"Sovereign Lord... you now dismiss your servant in peace."**

Later this week, we begin a new year. As we look back and see how bad we were at keeping some of the promises that we made last January 1st. As we begin a new year, we promise that we will do better in 2015. I promise to eat better. I'm going to spend less. I'm going to get things done earlier. I'm going to get more exercise. I'm going to spend more time in church. But a year from now, we once again will see that we have broken promises. What a comfort that God is not like us. Even though we have every intention on keeping our promises, it doesn't always happen. God keeps his. He

promised Simeon that he would see the Savior with his own eyes. God kept his promise. He promised this Savior would bring comfort. He did.

He also brings us comfort in our lives today, right now. He brings us peace and comfort. In a world that is filled with uncertainty, isn't it a comfort to know that the Prince of Peace comes to bring US peace. In our final hymn today, we sing the words: *"He comes the broken heart to bind, The bleeding soul to cure, And with the treasures of his grace To enrich the humble poor. Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace, Your welcome shall proclaim, And heav'n's eternal arches ring with your beloved name."* We sang these words during the season of Advent. They reminded us as to why Jesus was coming into this world. But these words also remind us why he HAS come as well.

Small things come in big packages. That child in Simeon's hands is God's BIG gift to this world. May he bring us peace always. Amen.