

We find peace at our Lord's coming.

Text: Luke 2:25-40 for 12/27/2020 by Pastor Bolwerk

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. 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." 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 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. 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.

What is the opposite of peace? Some might say it is war, or strife, or social unrest. While at first glance that may seem to be true, but there is something deeper that causes a lack of peace. What is it that causes war, strife, and unrest? It's fear. It may be the fear of not having enough. It could be the fear of someone taking away power or freedom. It might be the fear of oppression, or hardship. In all of these cases, fear is caused by things that are unknown or out of people's control. Since people don't like to be afraid, they will often fight to take control. That fight for control causes unrest; it causes a lack of peace.

As we look ahead to a new year, we are faced with so many things that are out of our control. Because of that we may look to that new year with a twinge of fear in our hearts. Oh, we may hope this coming year is better than this year, but we can't be sure of that, can we? That uncertainty causes us fear. Today God helps to address our fears. As God sets before us Simeon and Anna, we hear words of peace. This peace goes beyond anything we can find in this world. This is the true peace of Christmas.

Theme: We find peace at our Lord's coming.

I. Peace for our fearful hearts.

II. Peace to face our final days.

As we think about our Lord bringing peace for fearful hearts we may wonder, "What fear?" Simeon didn't seem to have anything to fear. Luke tells us, **"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the**

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consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (vs. 25-26).

We are told Simeon was "righteous." He was right before God because he had faith in God. Along with being right with God, Simeon also knew he wasn't going to die until he saw the Christ! That could be a long time! So what could Simeon possibly be afraid of? We don't know how old Simeon was when the Holy Spirit told him he would live to see the Messiah. What if he was young man? He may have had the fear of living a long life with a painful disease. Maybe he was afraid of seeing his family and friends die before he would see the Christ. And then there were also all of the things in this world that were out of his control. There were many things that could have caused Simeon fear. What about you? While you may have hope for 2021 no one knows what future will bring. So what causes you fear as you look ahead to the upcoming year?

Along with worldly things that make us afraid, there is always that little part of us that fears God. We fear God because of what God knows about us. Simeon said of Jesus, **"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"** (vs. 34-35). Sure, we may be able to keep secrets from the people in our lives, but there is nothing we can hide from God. He knows all the deepest, darkest secrets of our hearts. God even knows those secret sins we easily hide from others. Simeon knew that. We know that, too. We know God's holy justice demands that those sins be punished eternally. We can't hide from God, and that can make us afraid – afraid of facing God's judgment.

But when our Lord Jesus comes, he brings a peace that relieves all of our fears. Simeon said, **"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"** (vs. 29-30). God fulfilled his promise to Simeon right before his very eyes. Simeon actually held his Lord and Savior in his own arms. Simeon understood this tiny baby came to save him, and this world, from sin. This Child, who would remove the world's sin, did just that by fulfilling God's law. We are told, **"When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord [...]"** (v. 39). It is the breaking of God's Law that brings God's anger upon us. Yet, even as a baby Jesus was keeping God's law for you and me. Jesus lived his entire life as our substitute. The sins which cause our fear, Jesus never committed those sins. Our Lord lived a perfect life, and then he gave up his perfect life to make us right with God. It is Jesus who makes us righteous, just like Simeon.

It can be tempting to think that Simeon had peace because he actually saw Jesus. We have not seen the baby Jesus with our own eyes, but we can certainly have the peace he brings. Seeing isn't necessary for faith. The Bible says, **"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"** (Hebrews 11:1). Jesus himself said, **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"** (John 20:29). You have heard what Christ has done for you, and through that good news the Holy Spirit created

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faith in you. Your faith rests its hope on the salvation which that baby was bringing into the world. Jesus kept God's law for you, so God the Father now says you are "not guilty." As the Apostle Paul put it, **"Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Romans 5:1). Jesus gives us the peace of knowing our heavenly Father is not angry with us because his own Son paid the price God's justice demands for sin. Christ gave up his life to save us.

And if God is willing to give us full and free salvation through his own Son, God will certainly take care of our lives here in this world! We don't have to fear the unknown in this world. God, in his grace, is working out everything, even the things we fear, for our good. So find peace at your Lord's coming. It is a peace that removes fear.

The one thing people seem to fear the most is death. Some people fear death because they are afraid of what might be waiting for them after death. But for us Christians it is not always death itself we fear, but the process of dying. We often say we don't want to die some slow, painful death; we don't want to be a burden to our family and others. We don't want our last days in this world to be filled with sorrow and suffering. But we don't know what our final days will be like, and that can cause us to be fearful about our last days in this world. Yet our Lord's coming into this world gives us something that the world cannot give. He gives us peace to face our final days.

We often like to think we are going to live to some ripe, old age, but no one really knows how long they will live. Any day can be our "final" day in this world. The same was true for Simeon. Sure, the Holy Spirit told Simeon he wouldn't die before he had seen the Christ. So how old was Simeon when he saw Jesus? We don't know. The Bible doesn't say. So how old was Simeon when he died? Again, we don't know. We don't know how long Simeon lived after seeing his Savior. But we do know that however many days Simeon had left in this world he could face them all knowing he was at peace with God. Simeon said, **"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace"** (v. 29). Simeon was assured that all of God's promises were fulfilled in that little baby. No matter what troubles or problems Simeon had to face after that day he could have peace because he knew everything was right between himself and God.

The same was true for Anna. We do know how old Anna was: She was 84. She had lived a long life. Anna may have felt like she was near the end of her days. This may be why she seems so excited about seeing her Lord. Luke tells us that when Anna saw Jesus, **"she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem"** (v. 38). Again, we don't know how long Anna lived after seeing the baby Jesus. But whether it was ten days or ten years Anna was able to live out her final days as a "thank you" to God, sharing God's peace with the people around her.

Jesus brings us peace with God. His peace gives us confidence in our "final" days. We need that confidence living as Christians today. Every day more people turn away from the faith. Unbelievers speak against us and what we believe. Satan and the world bombard

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us with lies trying to get us to leave our Lord and Savior. And in these "last days" before Judgment Day things are only going to get worse. Yet we know we don't have to be afraid because Jesus defeated our real enemies: Satan, sin, and death. Jesus made peace between us and God. Trusting in him we know our sins are forgiven; we know an eternity in the perfection of heaven waiting for us.

Since we have nothing to fear we can be confident living as Christ's believers, no matter our "last days" bring. That means we can be confident in displaying our thanks to God with our lives. Like Anna we can confidently speak about our Lord to all who are looking for peace with God. We can confidently follow God's commands, knowing that when we stumble at keeping those commands our Lord is there to help us up. We can confidently live our lives serving Jesus. We do that knowing no matter what the world or Satan may throw at us our Lord is right there watching over us, guarding and protecting us from all evil. And even if our Lord should allow pain, persecution, or hardship into our lives we can still have peace. We can be at peace even in the midst of suffering because Jesus will use even suffering for our eternal good. So no matter how many days we have left before our Lord takes us to heaven, Jesus gives us the confidence we need to face each one of those days with peace.

As we look ahead to the new year we are filled with hope, and perhaps a little apprehension. We don't know what the future holds. We don't even know what tomorrow will bring. But we do know this: our Savior, Jesus Christ, has come to bring us peace. Christ's peace takes away our fears: the fear of uncertainty; the fear of God's anger. Our Lord's presence in our lives gives us the strength we need to live all our day in peace. May this coming year be filled to overflowing with the gracious gift of our Lord's peace. Amen.