



# THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

Light of the Valley Lutheran Church

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## The Wait Will End

Luke 2:25-40 (NIV84)

<sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: <sup>29</sup> "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all people, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." <sup>33</sup> The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> 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, <sup>35</sup> so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." <sup>36</sup> 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, <sup>37</sup> and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

How was your Christmas? Did you get what you want or are you still waiting for something? I am actually still waiting on a couple of Christmas presents myself, but they should be here soon. A couple of days, though, that's nothing like the wait that Simeon had.

The common conception of Simeon is much like our bulletin cover. We picture him as an old man, but we don't actually know that from his description in Luke 2. Luke says that Simeon was righteous and devout and that "he was waiting for the 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." (verses 25-26) Many have assumed that since God told Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ that this was a long time coming and so he was probably old. We may not know Simeon's age, but we do know that he was waiting, waiting specifically for the consolation of Israel.

What is the consolation of Israel? We know that to console someone means to comfort someone who has a sense of loss or are troubled by something. What had Simeon lost? He had lost the same things that his people had lost. They had lost the throne in Jerusalem. A descendant of David had been replaced by this non-Jew named Herod. The great temple of Solomon had been lost by the Babylonian raiders nearly 600 years prior to him. His country had lost its independence as they were ruled now by the Roman Empire who had put Herod on that throne. And yet Luke says nothing of any personal losses that Simeon may have sustained.

Political times change. Rulers come and go. What does it really matter to Simeon to lose these things? For the Jews, this was a big deal. They were looking for the Messiah King to arise. The loss of David's descendants as king over Judea made them wonder, "Where exactly is this promised king supposed to come from now?" Then there was the loss of the Temple. That was where God said his presence was going to dwell. Many Jews thought that as long as they still had the temple, then they still had God's love and protection. Now there is a rebuilt version that couldn't even hold a candle to the one Solomon had made. Simeon was still holding on to what God had said, words that we ourselves heard a few weeks ago before Christmas, "Comfort, comfort my people." (Isaiah 40:1) Simeon wanted that comfort, that consolation, that when God would come, their hard service would be over, that when the Messiah would finally come, all their sins would be paid for.

Simeon wasn't the only one waiting. There was another person at the temple that day, in fact, she pretty much never left the temple. Her name was Anna. Now, we do know that Anna had been waiting an extremely long time for the redemption of Jerusalem, the buying back of their great city from its dishonor, but more importantly from its sin. Luke describes her as very old, married only seven years, and then was a widow up to the point when we meet her at the age of 84. All that time waiting, though, and she continued to serve God every day. "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." (verse 37) Even though she was not promised like Simeon that she would not die before seeing the redemption of Jerusalem, here she was, waiting to see that message fulfilled.

What are we waiting for? We know that Christ has come into the world, yet we still have things that we are waiting for, things that we are waiting for from God. Maybe you are waiting for consolation like Simeon was, waiting for that moment when the pain goes

away, when I am comforted by God and feel that peace in a way that I never have before. Maybe you are waiting for things to go back to normal, what with all the Christmas hub-bub and presents and traveling and family get-togethers and days off school and sales, sales, sales! Maybe you are waiting for things to get easier as the schedule finally slows down.

Have you grown tired waiting for these things to happen? Has the pain and loss been around too long and although the sharpness is dulled, it just won't go away? Has it been too long since things have been normal? Is your schedule still as hectic as ever? The longer and longer you wait, the more it seems like maybe you are waiting in vain. Is this wait ever going to pay off?

I recently spent some time in an Xfinity Comcast store. That's where you can see how long people will wait to get things done. One nice lady who I was sitting next too immediately told me once I sat down that she would not wait much longer. She had things to do and places to be, even seeing one of her kids that day for a program at school. She knew that she was next up, but the last straw for her was one of the customer service reps leaving the floor. She was done, and she stormed out. It wasn't but a couple of minutes after she left that her name was called.

Worse than any Comcast store, some people have waited an exceedingly long time for God to fix things in their lives, to give them comfort and consolation, to have things go back to normal, for things to get easier. Some have given up that wait. They figure waiting for God to fix all these things is worse than waiting in line at a Comcast store. It's like a long wait for a train that don't come. Maybe even you are getting to that point.

For those who are waiting, there is most wonderful news for you today with what happened to Simeon and Anna. Now Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit to go into the temple courts the day that Mary and Joseph were bringing baby Jesus to fulfill the requirements of the religious law. Then Simeon saw him. He picked up that baby Jesus, held him in his arms, and declared, "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." (verses 29-32) The wait was over! Simeon had seen the consolation of Israel. He had seen the Messiah with his own eyes. Now he could live the rest of his life in peace. The wait was over; God had come through on his promise.

And then there was Anna. Without even promising her this, God made sure she was in the right place at the right time after all those years she spent worshiping the Lord. "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." (verse 38) This was her redemption in bodily form. This little Christ Child would buy her back from the devil and from all her sins. He was the proof that she would belong to God forever.

As we wait for God, it is important for us to search God's Word to see if we have a Simeon promise or an Anna promise that we are looking forward to. Simeon was promised specifically by God that he would not die before he saw the Lord's Christ. Anna only had the same promises as every believer – promises specifically meant for us, but not given on a specific timeframe during our lives.

We are waiting as Anna did. Anna was not promised to stay alive until seeing Jesus with her own two eyes. She had lived a long life as a widow. She knew hurt. She knew loss. Yet throughout all those years, she worshiped God, waiting for him to fulfill his promises of deliverance and redemption just as he had promised her in his Word. This is why for the duration of her wait, she continued praying and fasting because she knew God would come through on his promises, even if she had to wait until the day she died and went to heaven.

You and I, we have the Anna promises. God has provided our redemption, the buying back of our lives from the eternal consequences of our sins. This is the hope that we cling to while the pain of loss bears down on us. Even while life continues to change and never really gets back to normal, our God never changes. His promises remain the same. Our sins are forgiven because he gave us the gift of the Christ Child. One day, we will have our wait pay off. Because of the gift of Christ Child, the day will come when we will experience life without suffering and loss and pain. The Christ Child opened heaven to us. He is our comfort and our consolation while the rest of the world still hurts us. He moves us from the daily trudge to an eternity of complete bliss. One day the pain will all be gone replaced with complete and utter joy.

We know that our wait will pay off. The proof was there in Simeon's arms. That is our salvation. Simeon held Jesus, and that's good enough for us to know that God has kept his promises and that he will keep his promises to us that we will be in heaven with him forever, no matter how long we have to wait. Through the eyes of Simeon and Anna, we have seen our salvation which God has prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel. Amen.

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