

Sunday After Christmas
December 27, 2009
Luke 2:25-38

Joy was front and center Christmas Eve. These verses make us think especially of peace, though surely Simeon and Anna experienced great joy, too. In this particular case the peace came from the ending of a long wait.

Simeon knew that day that

The Wait for God's Salvation Was Finally Over.

The wait had been a long one, sort of like what the season of Advent feels like to an eight-year-old waiting for Christmas to arrive.

Those who had trusted God to keep His many promises about the Savior from sin and its consequences had been waiting and waiting and waiting, generation after generation, since the fall into sin at the Garden of Eden. Thousands of years had gone by. Now a person named Simeon was waiting and another named Anna. Many others were still waiting, too.

Many in the world were not waiting. They were just existing, spending a certain number of years on the planet, spending most of their time doing what it took to keep living another day. Some worked to do what they thought they should do to live after this life, but they were not waiting for God to keep any promises. Most of them knew nothing about the promises. And sadly, even for many who had known about God's promises, the people of Israel, there was no waiting. To them, too, everything just seemed to go on and on and so they gave up believing God would ever do anything in regard to a Savior. But some did trust those promises and so they kept waiting.

For a man named Simeon, there was a startling, exciting development. He was a prophet. The Holy Spirit gave him God's Word. One day, the Holy Spirit made a word from God known to Simeon that was especially for Simeon himself. "You won't die until you have seen the Lord's Anointed One." And on another day, the Holy Spirit directed him to the temple to see that Anointed One.

Anna also received God's Word by the Spirit. She showed up at just the right moment at the right spot, too.

And when Simeon and then Anna laid eyes on Jesus, their wait was over. Clearly it had to have been the Holy Spirit who identified Jesus as the Christ. Do you think Simeon might have been temporarily a little surprised when it was a six week old Baby that God indicated was the promised Savior? Even thirty years later God had to give a sign to John the Baptist to identify the Savior – "the One on Whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the One."

When Jesus arrived here the wait for the coming of God's Anointed Prophet/Priest/King was over. The Christ had arrived.

We are waiting again, but waiting for the eternal, glorious benefits of Jesus won by Jesus when He comes again. It is interesting that, the wait has been long, generations have come and gone. Many don't wait. Some even laugh at those of us who do. They say, "Everything is just going to go on the same as always. You live and you die and that's it." But the wait will end and it will again end with the visible return of Jesus Christ as the Final Judge. Do not give up patiently waiting! Jesus came once; He'll also come the second time.

For what were Simeon, Anna, and others waiting? They were waiting for the Consolation of Israel. The first meaning of consolation is that which consoles. It's comfort, encouragement. It would involve God in calling people to His encouragement. What kind of comfort and encouragement was it?

It is also called the Redemption of Jerusalem. Redemption has to do with payments and costs. It was a Word God made quite clear through the worship forms He had given to Israel through Moses. The cost involved the death of sacrificed animals or birds, like the two doves or pigeons Joseph and Mary brought with them that day from Bethlehem to the temple. And in the case of all those Old Testament time sacrifices the payment of death purchased freedom from sin, its guilt and its consequences, especially the death of the sinner. Note – do you see how all those animal sacrifices functioned as substitutes? They died instead of the people bringing the sacrifices. The payment for sin brought the consolation, the comfort of the forgiveness of sin.

So, they awaited salvation. It was salvation from sin and death. Simeon, in prophetic words from the Holy Spirit, teaches us great things about this salvation. It is prepared by God. That is comforting. God willed to save. He planned it. He announced it. He set it up. He carried it out. That makes salvation sure. Jesus is God that Savior but obviously in the flesh so that He could do the redeeming from sin for, in place of, the sinners. Simeon added that salvation is in accord with God's Word. That emphasizes again that it was the exact salvation God had promised in His Word.

It is a light for revelation to the Gentile nations. God's salvation itself enlightens. It removes sin's blindness. It also reveals. It lets us know what could not otherwise be known – how to be rescued from sin and death. It's also Israel's glory. The coming of the Savior fulfilled Israel's purpose and it would bring glory to Israel, to the real Israel of believers in the promised Savior.

They awaited the Christ from the Lord. The Father anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit for this work. And here He was in Simeon's arms!

Simeon said that Jesus would have profound effects on people. He would cause hearts to be revealed. How a person reacts to Jesus show whether trust in God or unbelief lives in that heart. So Jesus would cause the falling and rising of many, really of all. Jesus would

determine that. By faith in Jesus, God will raise up people to life and salvation. But unbelief would result in a sure fall. Everyone who'd say things against Jesus, deny Him, reject Him, contradict Him will fall.

But to every believer, like Simeon and Anna, there would be peace – peace with God, harmony, contentment, confidence, a readiness to serve the Lord now and to go to the Lord forever after. Righteousness would be God's gift to all such and piety, the piety of worship, fasting, prayer, praise to God, telling others all about Jesus, would result from all these gifts of God to the believer. These things are yours by faith in Jesus. Such faith makes us able to keep waiting for Jesus, also to give us eternal, glorious salvation with Jesus. Amen.