

SERMON FOR DECEMBER 30, 2018

TEXT: LUKE 2: 25-35

THEME: CHRISTMAS WISHES FULFILLED

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name were Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, <sup>28</sup> he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, <sup>29</sup> "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." <sup>33</sup> And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed <sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

In the name of Jesus:

In the days after Christmas, children are asked if they got what they wanted for Christmas. A good Christmas for a child many times is determined if their Christmas wishes were fulfilled. On this sixth day of Christmas, God speaks to us through the Gospel writer Luke, and we hear Simeon say that his Christmas wish was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. So too, our wishes, our hopes, for eternal life are fulfilled in the child born in a manger in Bethlehem, Jesus.

Luke tells us about a man by the name of Simeon. Simeon was a faithful believer in the Lord. Simeon was promised that he would see the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ before he died. And so Simeon waited, and waited, and waited. Day in and day out he went to the Temple, worshipping and praising God, knowing that God would keep His promise, Simeon, though, just didn't know when.

On that day when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving for the gift of their Son, Jesus, Simeon saw this Gift, this Baby, and rejoiced. He cradled the infant and then sang this song: “<sup>29</sup> “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” And then Simeon returned the Baby to His mother, and waited some more. God’s promise was fulfilled, and Simeon could die a happy, blessed man. But when did he die? No one knows, it could have been that day, a week, month, year, or a decade later.

Simeon got what he wanted, what he longed for, and an opportunity to see, with his own eyes, the fulfillment of God’s promises made to the people of God in the Old Testament. He saw the Baby and rejoiced, and lived his life in eager expectation to see the Lord’s salvation at his death. Oh, I can imagine he still had his crosses to bear, his health, or failing health, the oppression of the Roman government, the realization that the things of this life won’t last forever. But Simeon rejoiced, because he saw Jesus, he held Jesus, his Savior, and Simeon knew that God keeps His promises and gives joy that lasts.

Joy for many in our world consists of getting what they want for Christmas. But where can true joy be found? Some might be disappointed in what they got for Christmas. Joy for others might not be at all found in physical gifts that were wrapped and placed under the tree. Joy, for some, might mean having good health’s health, or family present during the holidays. So how can there be joy for a family who has just arrived back from the funeral of a loved one at Christmas? Where can

joy be found when a person continually suffers an affliction and good health is but a memory? When we find our joy only in earthly things, we will be hugely disappointed, especially when we receive physical blessings that will not last. Simeon's joy was rooted in God's promise for eternity. Simeon found true joy not in the things of the world but in the fulfillment of the promises of God. God is faithful. God promised a Savior and delivered a Savior. Simeon, holding the baby Jesus' possessed a heart full of joy for he had a heart and life that was full of Jesus.

True joy is found not that we have the things of the world, but true joy is found in having a heart and life that are full of the right things. Just as God had made a promise to Simeon and delivered, so too God has made a promise to you that He has kept. God kept His Word in sending the Messiah, for to you is born in the city of David a Savior, Christ the Lord.

God has kept His promise to you. He not only loved you so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to be your Savior, but God has kept His promise in that He has called you to be His child. God's good gifts to you at Christmas are found in Jesus, born for you. Jesus is the light to lighten the Gentiles. Note what the Apostle says in our Epistle lesson for today: he says that you are God's chosen one, holy and beloved! You have a heavenly Father whose heart is bursting in love for you. How do you know that? Let this be the sign, to you in the city of David a Savior has been born for you, He is Christ the Lord, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and placed in a manger. As Jesus was wrapped in blankets to stay warm, so now God wraps you in His love. None of us in any way deserve this love, but God gives us His love because of who He is.

And now we are called by God to live lives of love, in love for God, and in love for one another. None of us can do this by ourselves, so God comes to us, to gift us with His love. He comes to you today, in His Word, proclaiming that your sins are forgiven in Christ. Jesus comes to you, today, in love, in, with, and under the bread and wine to give you Himself, so that you can receive God's forgiveness and love. It isn't by accident that we usually sing Simeon's song, called the Nunc Dimitis after our celebration of the Lord's Supper. We, like Simeon, have beheld God's love to us in Jesus. We have peace with God all on account of Jesus. Peace, that absence of God's wrath and hostility toward sinners, because Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for you and me, taking on God's wrath and suffering the punishment we deserve because of our sinfulness.

And like Simeon, we can not only depart in peace, but also live in peace today and everyday. How? By letting the Word of the Lord dwell in us richly. Note what the Apostle Paul says: " <sup>15</sup> and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." God's Word became flesh in Jesus. We have His Word that He speaks to us in the Scriptures. As we live in God's Word, the Word lives in and through us, so that in all we do, in Word and deed, we do it in the name of Jesus. As we receive God's love, God's love flows in and through us to others, so that we have hearts full of compassion, we show kindness, humility,

meekness and patience, bearing one another's burdens, caring for one another just as Jesus cares for us. Jesus' love binds us and holds us together, so that we live together as God's family, His love pouring out in our lives to others in a powerful display of God living in and through us.

One of the most awesome sights I have ever seen is one of the wonders of the world, Niagara Falls. On the American side, you can walk underneath the American Falls and feel the rush of the waters in front of your. If you were to cross over from America to Canada, you can see up close the Horseshoe Falls. There on the Canadian side you cannot only see the waters rushing over the banks and tumbling down below. But if you were to follow the road from the peak or apex of the Horseshoe Falls, down a ways, you would find its starting point at the Niagara River. Then following the path of the River, from its beginnings, you would ultimately end up at the Falls, all of the waters converging into one powerful waterfall.

This is a wonderful image of God's love. Beginning with His promise to Adam and Eve, God throughout the Old Testament points to and predicts the birth of His Son Jesus Christ. And when Jesus is born, it is as if God's waterfall of love rushes upon sinners so that we are overwhelmed by God's love for us. Like Simeon, we come to God's house to see and hear of God's promises fulfilled to us in Jesus. Here in God's house, we rejoice in God's love proclaimed to us in Jesus and given to us in Holy Communion. And just like Simeon, we leave God's house, departing with God's peace, love and blessing, blessed by God, to be a blessing of God's love to others. For we have seen God's salvation in Jesus, poured out for you, to share with all.

Amen