

I.N.I.

Sunday after Christmas
December 29, 2019
Luke 2:25-38

In Christ Jesus, the Ransom for our sins, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

How do you make the essence of Christmas, the spirit of Christmas last? Spread out the Christmas bill payments? Keep the tree and lights up for a month or two?

In our text this morning we have portrayed for us an example from two Christians as to **HOW THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS CAN REMAIN IN OUR HEARTS** long after the carols have been sung, the presents opened, the decorations taken down and yes, the bills paid.

Our text takes place 40 days after the birth of Jesus. Luke tells us when Jesus was 8 days old He was circumcised according to the Law of Moses given to Israel by God. In Lev. 12 we read that a woman who had given birth to a son had to wait 40 days after the birth before she could come into the sanctuary of the temple. Firstborn sons were presented to the Lord as priests, but since the entire tribe of Levi served as priests, the firstborn sons were redeemed by a payment of money and by the offering of a sacrifice. The woman was to bring a year old lamb as a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtledove as a sin offering. If the couple could not afford a lamb two young pigeons or two turtledoves would suffice, one sacrificed as the burnt offering the other as the sin offering. Joseph and Mary were quite poor at this time so they brought two doves for their offering.

Joseph and Mary didn't realize that there was a man waiting in the temple for their arrival, waiting for that very day to take place. Simeon---a devout believer who longed for the Consolation of Israel. This term "Consolation of Israel" speaks of the very definite promises God made to His people concerning the Messiah. It is nothing other than God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that from their seed the Savior would come; a Messiah born from the tribe of Judah, David's Son yet David's Lord; the promised Kinsman-Redeemer. The Holy Spirit had in a special way revealed to this child of God that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ, the Messiah. So he knew that the long awaited Savior would be born sometime during his lifetime. How thrilling!

Imagine the eager anticipation and excitement each morning would bring. Would this be the day! We know how exciting it is to wait for something promised to us, how about waiting for something for some 4,000 years. That was how long it had been since God first promised the Savior to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Almost 2,000 years later God repeated His promise to Abraham and during the next 1,500 years His prophets spoke of it over and over again. It is no wonder that when Simeon realized that this baby in the arms of Mary was the Messiah, he quickly walked up to her and took the baby into his arms and in humble awe held him tightly and proclaimed those marvelous words we know as the "Nunc Dimitis."

The theme and first point of our sermon text this morning is---

**THE TRUE SPIRIT AND JOY OF CHRISTMAS
I: LEADS TO A LIFE IN CHRIST.**

Simeon declared, "**LORD, NOW YOU ARE LETTING YOUR SERVANT DEPART IN PEACE, ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD;...**" As you have promised Lord! Day after day Simeon clung to that promise of God; not only that he would see the Christ in his day, but that this Christ would be his Savior, would save **HIM** from his sins. Why was that so exciting? Simeon understood what his life was like—one unending failure after another to keep God's commandments perfectly as God demands. He knew that his sins of thought, word and deed were more than enough to earn for him an eternal place in hell, everlasting separation from God.

We too, need to hear this message again and again. You and I have not been as loving, caring, understanding and forgiving to our neighbor as God demands. You and I have not loved and worshipped God as He demands with all our heart, all our soul and with all our mind. You and I have not lived up to His perfect demands in our thoughts, in our words and in our actions. You and I have been more selfish than selfless; more sinful than sincere; more sarcastic than sacrificing; more wanting than giving. You have earned God's wrath and condemnation over and over and over again. And so have I. Simeon realized this also in his life, that is why he was so excited, so eager, so

thrilled to come to the temple day after day. He was clinging to the promise God had given Him.

Someone has said that the difference between happiness and joy is this. Happiness is a response to an event. You are given a present and you are happy. You win a basketball game and you are happy. You give birth to a child and you are happy. It is a feeling in response to an event.

But **JOY** is much more. Joy is that relationship emotion that is centered in Christ. So even though we may not always be happy because some event has made us sad; i.e. the death of a loved one, some serious illness or injury, loss of a job, or a countless number of other things; yet we still can be filled with **JOY** in Christ.

The happiness of Christmas may be past. The event is over, the excitement, the anticipation is now history recorded in pictures or video; but the **JOY OF CHRISTMAS** still is in the heart of those who cling to the promises of God's Word. No doubt Simeon had sad days after this event before he died, he may even have died a slow, painful death, but the joy that he had in his heart was centered in the Christ and in the promises God had made in Him.

That leads us to the second point.

THE TRUE SPIRIT AND JOY OF CHRISTMAS II: LEADS TO A CONFESSION OF CHRIST

Simeon knew the real purpose of this child. Simeon's eyes saw the salvation prepared for him through this Child. That is why he was now ready to die in peace. For he now knew that there was a peace between God and men because of this Baby. Simeon not only saw this Baby in his arms, he foresaw what this Baby would have to do. He foresaw the agony and the pain that this Baby would have to endure in order to bring salvation to all people, Jew and Gentile alike. We read vs. 30-33 **"FOR MY EYES HAVE SEEN YOUR SALVATION WHICH YOU HAVE PREPARED BEFORE THE FACE OF ALL PEOPLES. A LIGHT TO BRING REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, AND THE GLORY OF YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL."** AND JOSEPH AND HIS MOTHER MARVELED AT THOSE THINGS WHICH WERE SPOKEN OF HIM.

The true joy of that first Christmas was in Simeon's heart and can remain in ours all year through when we **SEE THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE CHRIST CHILD'S COMING** as Simeon did: **a ransom price for sin—the shed blood of a Savior slain on the cross: the assurance of victory over death—a glorious resurrection from the dead; salvation to all who believe; both Jew and Gentile. Believing these truths makes one more than ready to depart this life in real peace.**

We know very little about Anna, but we know enough. When she saw the Christ child she gave thanks to the Lord and went and told others about this Child to all in Jerusalem who looked for the redemption. The Christmas joy lived in her heart long after this event of seeing the Baby Jesus. It was kept alive by giving it away. We mentioned that in our Christmas Day sermon--the best way for us to keep our joy, our Christmas joy alive all year long is by giving it away to others.

How can we have **JOY** in the midst of the sorrows of this life? Why can we rejoice even in the face of trials, tribulations, sicknesses, losses, failures, deaths and disasters? How can we still be filled with **JOY** even if our lives are filled with misery?

Because like Anna we have the Christmas **JOY** to give to others.

The **JOY** of knowing our Savior has come in the person of Jesus and has lived a perfect life for us.

The **JOY** of knowing that He then went to the cross to suffer and die for us, paying the price for our sins: damnation.

The **JOY** of knowing that He redeemed us and has risen back to life assuring us of a resurrection to everlasting life and has promised to be with us always even to the very end of days.

It is no wonder that Joseph and Mary marveled at the words of Simeon. We, too, can only wonder in amazement as we realize and appreciate the peace which the Holy Spirit gives to us when facing frustrations in life and fears at death.

Wonder at the great love of God the Father in giving us the most blessed Gift of His Son;

Wonder at the selfless obedient love of Jesus to come as this little Baby and be placed under the Law and keep all of the Commandments;

Wonder at our Savior's willingness to go the way of the cross to suffer and die; to endure the agony of hell and damnation for us who deserved our God's wrath;

Wonder with amazement that He would come to pay a debt He did not owe because we owed a

debt we could not pay.

By next weekend, or at least by Epiphany, most of the Christmas trees and decorations will have been thrown away or put away for another year. The celebration will be over. Christmas bills will still be coming in, but that is not how to keep the Christmas spirit alive. For you and for me the real **SPIRIT & JOY** of Christmas will continue. Next month, 6 months from now, next fall we will still be rejoicing in the Good News of a Savior born for all when we cling to the promises of God's Word; when we see our Savior in these promises and when we share these promises and this Christmas joy with others.

Then the year 2020 will be filled with the spirit and joy of Christmas and we will be able to do as the Apostle Paul encouraged the Christians of his day: **BE JOYFUL ALWAYS! REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS! I WILL SAY IT AGAIN, REJOICE!**
HALLELUJAH!

Amen.