

## **Luke 2:25-40 Joy to the World, the Lord Has Come! Christmas 1 December 31, 2017**

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God's grace and peace in Christ our Savior give a great reason to rejoice! Amen.

God's joyful news is written in Luke 2:25-40

These are Your words heavenly Father. Use them to give us eternal joy. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Christian Friends Rejoice!

Christmas has come and gone. Has it left you with joy or sadness? Some of you met with family and friends, but others were sick and missed those times over the holiday. Some people got the gifts they wanted while others were disappointed. In today's lesson, what gave Simeon a lasting joy? He didn't meet relatives for the holiday, but met a new family. He didn't get a gift that day, yet God gave Him just what he wanted and needed. Although Jesus was only a baby, Simeon believed that God was keeping His promise to save him and all people from being condemned forever. Today through God's Word, we too can find a the source of joy that will not disappoint us. God has kept His promise to send His Son:

### **Joy to the world, the Lord is come!**

**First, we can have joy if we are prepared for Christ.** The day that the baby Jesus was brought to the temple, there were probably 100's of people in the large courtyard. But, there were only a few who were waiting for His coming as the promised Savior. What were the rest of the people doing there? They had come to impress God by their works, thinking that they could save themselves. Later Jesus warned, *"You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you."* (John 12:35) Too many people in the world are in the dark about Jesus. They are search for God in the wrong places and have no joy in Jesus. They will be terrified Jesus comes to judge their sins.

But Simeon was prepared by the Holy Spirit. It states, *"It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus... he took Him in his arms and praised God..."* (v.25-28) Simeon knew from God's Word that he was a sinner who deserved God's judgment. But he also believed God's promise of a coming Savior. Along with the blessing of his faith, the Holy Spirit had revealed a future event. On the day when Mary and Joseph left Bethlehem and arrived with Jesus at the temple, he was led by the Spirit to meet them.

Mary and Joseph followed Jewish law that required that a woman bring a sacrifice of purification to the temple 40 days after giving birth to a baby boy. If they had been wealthy, they would bring a lamb and dove to sacrifice. If they were poorer, they would bring two doves, which is what Joseph and Mary brought. They also presented Jesus to God at the temple because He was a firstborn male. Ever since the time of the Exodus from Egypt, when God spared the firstborn children of Israel, He required that parents redeem them with money. These laws foreshadowed the sacrifice that Jesus would make to redeem the world.

So, God led Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to the temple by His Word. He led Simeon there by a direct revelation to see the Savior he had been waiting for. When Simeon saw Jesus, he joyfully took the baby in his arms and thanked God for sending Him. Most people are happy when they see a newborn baby. Simeon's joy came from faith worked by the Holy Spirit to know what this baby would later accomplish.

God's Word reveals our sinfulness & our need for a Savior. It also shows Jesus as our Savior. Psalm 40 states, *"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. (v.1) Isaiah wrote, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."* (Isaiah 25:9) It's hard to see God's love or goodness in our sinful world with tragedies or illnesses. We need God's Word so that our faith remains focused on Christ like Simeon.

**Second, Simeon's wait was worth it.** His great hope was fulfilled. He said, "*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.*" (v. 29-32) We don't know how long Simeon had to wait between hearing God's promise of Jesus and actually seeing Him. But, it was a great relief. He compared his experience to that of a slave, who had been promised to be set free but had to wait to experience day of freedom. That's what made Simeon joyful!

He knew that Jesus would win forgiveness not just for the Jews, but for all peoples of the world! *Isaiah 49 states: "It is too small a thing for you to ... bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."* (v. 6) Jesus was the substitute for all people. Whether He was perfectly keeping the law, even at 40 days old, or He innocently died on the cross, He accomplished everything required by God to bring forgiveness and eternal life for all.

Sadly, many people miss the joy. Simeon told Mary, "*This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel...*" (v.34) Later when Jesus was in His 3-year ministry, His preaching showed the shallowness of many people. They were outwardly religious, but depended on their works instead of God's solution. The Jews didn't want a future heaven; they wanted heaven now. Even Judas fell to that temptation and one of the dying next to Jesus still did not look to Him to be saved! We must be careful against sinful pride that keeps us from Jesus. We need the example of Simeon and Anna, who believed they were sinners condemned by God. They knew that only God through Jesus could save them. This Gospel message raised them to heights of great joy! Simeon's faith was so certain that he was ready to die the moment He saw baby Jesus. He felt no fear that God would condemn him because Jesus had come to pay for his sin and save him.

**Third, this joy can't be hidden.** Anna was a believer waiting for the promised Savior. When she saw baby Jesus, moved by the Spirit, "*she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*" (v.38) There were others waiting for the Lord's coming. Once she saw the Savior, she wanted them to know. It was the same with Jesus' disciples. When they were warned not to speak about Jesus, they responded, "*We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*" (Acts 4:20) Jesus had told them to spread the Good News to the world beginning at Jerusalem.

All people need God's revelation. After the crucifixion, everyone in Jerusalem knew that Jesus died. But they didn't know why. Jesus gave up His life on the cross to win eternal life for all people. By God's grace in Christ we believe this truth and have true joy! As we share this joyful news and the Holy Spirit moves people to believe, our joy will increase. God spoke through Simeon to encourage the faith of Mary and Joseph. God worked through Anna to tell others waiting for Jesus. We too can speak to others about their need for God's salvation in Christ. Some people will reject the good news, just as many did in at Jesus' time. Others will be convinced that Jesus is the Savior of the world, which means He is their Savior, too.

So, we've all experienced things that made us happy at Christmas, but they can't compare to the joy we have in Jesus. We don't get to see Jesus as a little baby like Simeon or Anna. But through faith, we know Him as our crucified and risen Savior. Our Lord has come to save us! Joy to the world! Amen.