

“All Year Long?”—Luke 2:25-27

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “All Year Long?”, is Luke 2:25-27 → *Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 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. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and . . . the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“I just can’t wait until Christmas!” A statement such as this usually flows across the lips of a little child who is expectantly waiting to open his gifts on Christmas Day. It is an expression of eager anticipation for his gift to be revealed, in the hope that it will be just what he asked for with such longing! While it is exciting for many adults to experience such joy in a little child in the midst of such hope, it can also fill the adults with a sense of apprehension. Why? Because adults know only too well that you don’t always get what you want in life and setting your hopes too high may set you up for a huge let-down. Maybe this unfortunate reality of life is why adults strive all the harder to fulfill the high hopes of children—they know only too well that life does not always give you what you want.

In our text we meet a man by the name of Simeon. Verse 25 describes him as a *righteous and devout* man, *waiting for the consolation of Israel*. He was a man who constantly lived with an “I can’t wait until Christmas!” attitude. This hopeful expectation was not based on some kind of desire to experience a joy which is so fleeting that it disappears when the gift loses its “luster.” His desire was to be devoted to the LORD with the desire to live in a right relationship with Him eternally! His hopeful expectation was based upon a joy which lasts forever by faith in the One Whom the LORD would send to make all things in a world of sin right again!

How did Simeon acquire such a hopeful expectation? His faith in Yahweh on the basis of His promise given in Isaiah 61:1-3. It is a prophecy concerning the LORD’s Anointed One Whom He would send to *bring good news to the poor . . . bind up the brokenhearted . . . proclaim liberty to the captives . . . comfort all who mourn, fill them with gladness instead of mourning and praise instead of a faint spirit*. It is a picture of deliverance from the bondage of sin and its affects upon our lives through the Person & Work of the Christ!

Simeon looked forward to the coming of the Christ because he was guided by the Holy Spirit. Verse 26 of the text says: *the Holy Spirit was upon him. 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*. Not only had the Holy Spirit given him faith to trust in *the Lord’s Christ* as revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures but somehow Simeon had received a special revelation from the Holy Spirit that he would be able to “celebrate Christmas” before he died! We have the impression from our text that he lived in that “Christmas expectation” every day!

According to verse 27 of our text even his coming *into the temple* was by direct guidance of *the Spirit*, Who orchestrated his meeting Jesus, *the Lord’s Christ*. Mary and Joseph went to the temple in obedience to God’s ceremonial law. *According to the custom of the Law* Mary was required to appear before the priest with the appropriate sacrifices for her purification. Since she and Joseph were poor they presented *two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering, which the priest sacrificed to make atonement for her to be clean*. (cf. Leviticus 12:8) It was in the midst of these everyday rituals that God placed the Christ into the arms of Simeon as he received the fulfillment of God’s special promise to him!

We actually have the privilege of celebrating Christmas all year long as we live in anticipation of meeting Christ as well! It happens when we gather together for divine service in worship. Amongst the gathered believers In worship Christ comes to us in the proclamation of His Word, in the Absolution pronounced upon our sins and in the distribution of His Sacraments! The Holy Spirit works through these mean of grace to give us forgiveness of sin and empowers us to live in obedience to Him in our daily vocations of life.

Our worship order even reflects this presence of Christ alongside of Simeon. Turn to page 199 in your hymnal. Notice the hymn we sing after we have experienced the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. It's called the "Nunc Dimitis," which are Latin words meaning "now depart." Let's speak them together:

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy Word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.

As Simeon held the baby Jesus in his arms he praised God with these words, the same words we sing after we have experienced the presence of Christ and the forgiveness of our sins in the Lord's Supper!

With these words Simeon expressed so much joy in the celebration of Christ's birth that he was now ready to *depart* this life *in peace*. His desire to experience the fulfillment of God's age old plan of salvation was so strong that he was ready to die. The whole purpose of his life had now been fulfilled! Do we consider meeting Jesus worth more than anything else in life? Do we come into this sanctuary much as Simeon entered the temple of the LORD expecting to meet Jesus? **Anxious to meet Jesus?!** Here is where Jesus comes to meet with you and give you His forgiveness all year long—not just at Christmas!

Notice Simeon stated the universal purpose for the Christ's coming. He confessed Jesus as the One Who would bring people out of the darkness of sin and into the light of His salvation. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus accomplished the final sacrificial act so that all people could be saved by faith in Him. In fact, by the phrase "the glory of Thy people Israel," the Holy Spirit states the whole purpose for the existence of Jewish nation. Once the Christ was revealed, no longer does Yahweh deal with people on the basis of nations. Colossians 3:11 says that in Christ *there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*

Thus, Israel's glory is bound up in the Person & Work of Jesus for **all** people! Galatians 3:13-14 says *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . . so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.* "The glory of Thy people Israel" is found in the One Simeon was holding in his arms, in Whose face we see the glory of God! (cf. John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 6:14)

Christ comes to us daily in His Word! Thus, we anxiously look forward each day to meeting Jesus through reading His Word in daily devotions! He comes to us regularly as we celebrate the Lord's Supper together and hear the proclamation of His Law and Gospel! Thus, we anxiously look forward to meeting together in worship with other believers to "gladly hear and learn" His Word and receive His forgiveness of sins! Renewed through such meeting with Jesus empowers you to continue being a "light" to those around you to fulfill your purpose as Christ's people by proclaiming *the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* We really do have the privilege of celebrating Christmas all year long! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen