

Wait For Jesus

It is interesting to read old sermons. Now, when I say old, I don't mean those sermons I wrote. And I don't mean the sermons that Pastor Shult preached before me. And I do not even mean the sermons which Brug preached when he served here. I mean sermons 200, 300 400 years ago. It is amazing to see what their struggles and joys were. One of the main lessons every parent understood was that their children didn't really belong to them. They lived in their homes. They had the privilege of caring for them and watching them grow. But they knew that that little boy or little girl didn't belong to them. They knew that God could take that child away from them at any moment. Because, very often, he did. Very often God would welcome them into his arms through the waters of baptism and then take them home away from their parents and at home with him.

Mary and Joseph learned the same lesson very early in their time as parents. They may have had the privilege to take care of Jesus. But he didn't belong to them. And this morning we are reminded of that fact. Mary and Joseph take Jesus into the Temple to be presented to the priests and circumcised. And there they amazed to find people there who had been waiting for them—and more importantly, for their baby son, named Jesus.

The first person we meet is a man named Simeon. And there is one detail we know about Simeon. And it's a very important one. God promised to him that he would not die before he saw the Messiah with his own eyes. And, when he sees Jesus, he rejoices. And even more than that—he prophesies. He tells Mary and Joseph: *Luke 2:29 "Sovereign LORD, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."*

This man who was now old in years had been waiting for this child for years. And for his own good and gracious reasons, the LORD told him that he would see the promised messiah with his own eyes before he died. And notice the promises that Simeon speaks: This child would be *light* for Gentiles. He would be the one who would open their eyes. He would show them their sins. He would show them that he was their Savior. And he would get his work done of Saving, finding and converting those living in darkness.

This was one of the promises God's word spoke of. This was the promise that Simeon latched onto. It stressed him. It gnawed at him that there were so very many people out there who did not know the light that he knew. And he patiently looked forward to the day when this Messiah would be born and bring comfort to these people living in darkness.

What about you—are you waiting and looking forward to Jesus bringing people out of darkness into his wonderful light? For us, we find a double darkness, a double sin. On the one hand, very often when we think about outreach and evangelism, it is with panic in our hearts. We ask Jesus: *Why* aren't you getting your work done better? Why can't I *see* the work you are doing? Or, on the completely opposite side of the spectrum, we aren't concerned at all. We are more concerned when we miss a football game or a show on TV than the work of spreading and sharing the light of Jesus with the world.

In these words we see an old man who has waited for decades for the Messiah to come and get his work done. And we wait with panic in our hearts or not a concern at all. And so, like Simeon, we have every reason to rejoice that this *Light* has come. For he opens up our eyes. He shows us our sins. And he shows us our need for a Savior. And then he shows us that Jesus *is* our Savior. Again, listen to the words Simeon uses to praise our Creator: *Luke 2:29 "Sovereign LORD, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."*

Simeon could wait joyously and patiently for Jesus because he would bring light to those living in darkness. But this Messiah would also bring *glory* to Israel. Now, remember how important of an issue this was for the Jewish people. Remember their history. They had been sold into slavery twice now. And when they get their homeland back, the Greeks conquer them. Then the Romans conquer them. Their temple was torn down and a sad copy was put up to replace it. The Hebrews were a sad, disparate and desperate people. They needed the comfort that Simeon spoke of. And so, the LORD, faithful to his promises, gave them comfort. And he gave them *glory*!

But, even in saying this, we need to say more about this glory. What sort of glory was this? *How* did the

LORD reveal his glory to his people? He did so by keeping his word. Jesus was born of a virgin. He was born in Bethlehem. He was a servant. He was a Prophet, Priest and King. All of these promises God piles up before us to remind us how difficult it was to be our Messiah and to show us that Jesus is the only one who would live up to God's word. He is the only one who would keep the promises God' made so long ago—and *all* of them.

That is how God revealed his glory. It wasn't by knocking down nations along with their Kings. It wasn't by piling up his enemies and making them pay for their rebellion. No, it was by keeping God's glorious word in a perfect, humble way. He did all of this to show everyone that he is faithful to his word.

And so, Jesus is a *Light* for the Gentiles. He is *glory* for Israel. But, what is he for me? And there is where we meet another person. We need a woman named Anna. And Luke is very precise and picky when he gives us details about her. What sort of woman was she? What was her life like? She was a woman who followed God's word. She married her husband as a virgin, with so much hope and expectation in her life. And, for seven years, she lived with her husband, having all the joy and comfort that comes with a marriage which rests on God and his word. And then God took her husband away from her. And, amid all the pain of losing her husband, where did she go? She went to the only place where she could pour out all the pain in her heart. She went to the LORD's Temple. And there she found the only one who could take away her pain and intense sorrow. And what started out as a desperate way to deal with her grief soon became a habit. And notice how Luke speaks of her. It is not a bad habit that she develops into. No, she fasts. She prays. She fills her life with God's word and his promises. And she does this, not just until she can grow past her loss of her husband. She does this till she is old, very old. And in every way subtly and not-so-subtly, Her God is telling her that it's time for her to go home too.

There is Anna. And that is her life. Then we see Mary and Joseph bringing their little son into the Temple. First Simeon shocks and amazes them. Then this prophetess finds them and the Christ-child and praises God and encourages everyone gathered there with God's promises.

What do we learn from this woman, so old and full of years? God keeps his word to many. But he also keeps his word to me! God had given to her promises. And she found her hope and strength and hope in them. But notice, she was patient. She was patient enough to wait years and decades until she saw the LORD deliver on those promises. No doubt there were times she cried in grief. No doubt, there were times she doubted. No doubt, there were times that she prayed that God would take her home to be with him and to see her husband again. But, what did she do? She waited patiently because the LORD had promised her that she would see the Messiah before she died.

What promises has Jesus give to you? Oh, if you can't think of any right now, what does that tell you? That should remind you that you need to be in God's word more. For in God's word and *only* in God's word does he tell his promises to us. And there you find so many rich and consoling promises. He will give you heaven through the blood of Jesus. He will give you your daily bread—everything you need for your daily life. He will give you comfort and peace. The world may promise that. But it won't give it to you. It gives you a bit a joy, followed by a life of pain. Jesus gives to us comfort and consolation.

But, learn from Anna. She waited patiently for the LORD to give her comfort in his own time and in his own way. Do not box God in and make him conform to your will. No, instead pray as Anna and Simeon, and the rest of the Christian Church after them: "May your kingdom come, May *your* will be done." So then, my brothers and sisters, wait patiently for your Savior to act. He keeps his word to the many. He is the light for the gentiles and glory for Israel. And he keeps his word to *you*.