

The Consolation for All Peoples

Christmas Day / Luke 2:25-32

Introduction:

If you have been with us through this Advent season, you might remember that Advent is the season leading up to Christmas, serving two purposes. First, it serves to remind us of the anticipation and joy of Jesus Christ's first coming, his incarnation. Secondly, it serves to build in our hearts a greater anticipation for His second coming. We understand what anticipation for something feels like, especially today right? Most of us probably woke up with some kind of anticipation for Christmas morning to arrive. I know for me, I love Christmas morning with my family, not because of the presents and festivities, but because of the joy we have in giving and sharing together. But as the years continue to pass, I find, by God's grace, a greater anticipation building in my heart in this season. The anticipation of joy-filled times with my family is good and right, but there is a greater event that I remind myself I'm waiting for. An event this season is supposed to point my heart to. This anticipation is for the day when I see the Lord face to face and experience the comfort and joy of His presence for all of eternity. And I want to call all of our hearts to grow in our anticipation of that day this morning by examining the hymn we see in Luke 2:29-32. Before considering the words of this hymn, though, notice how Luke sets it up in verses 25-26, where we see

THE LONGING FOR CONSOLATION

Look at the way verse 25 opens, "Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel." Luke points to a man named Simeon, in Jerusalem, who he calls "righteous and devout." Righteous speaks of his walk with God and obedience of the Lord's commandments. Devout points to his devotion and reverence of God. Luke continues, saying he was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." The Old Testament speaks often of God's promised consolation for Israel. We saw this promise at the beginning of our advent series, in Isaiah 40:1, where the Lord says "Comfort, Comfort my people." The consolation is comfort that would come as their sin was pardoned. You see, Israel was under its oppression because of its own sin, but the Lord spoke words of comfort and hope that their iniquity would be dealt with and they would receive forgiveness. Simeon's "waiting for the consolation of Israel," is intended to stand out here. He ends verse 25 showing how "the Holy Spirit was upon him," and says in verse 26, "it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." The connection of verse 26 to verse 25 cannot be missed. As the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, who was longing for consolation, the Spirit reveals to him that he will not die before he sees the Messiah, who would bring the consolation of Israel. Pay attention to the phrasing in verse 26, it says "he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." There is an intentional contrast of sights to draw our attention towards the sight of the Lord's Messiah. Luke wants us to understand that the sight of the Lord's Christ was a fulfillment of Simeon's waiting for the consolation of Israel. In his commentary, James Edwards correctly says, "Contrary to Israel's traditional expectation, Simeon does not hope simply for the comfort and vindication of Jerusalem. He awaits God's Messiah. For Simeon, 'faith in Christ is the legitimate answer to the legitimate Jewish expectation.'" And we will see how this faith is the focus of this passage and provides a greater consolation than expected. This brings us to the hymn, which I see revealing two marvelous things. First, how

A TASTE OF SALVATION BRINGS PEACE

Notice first how the narrative focuses on Simeon's sight of the Lord's Christ.

Look at verses 27-28 “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, he took him up in his arms and blessed God.” Verse 27 opens with another reference to the Spirit’s guidance of Simeon. Through this, Luke connects the Spirit’s revelation of seeing the Lord’s Christ to the Spirit’s leading into the temple, showing the Spirit guided him there to see the Lord’s Christ. But there is another significant connection harder to see in our translations. When Luke says Simeon “took” the child up in his arms, he uses the Greek word *dechomai* for took, meaning to receive or welcome. And this term is the root of the word he used for waiting in verse 25, which was *prosdechomai*. He is showing the consolation Simeon was waiting for, was the child he took or up in his arms. So, he blesses God because he saw in Jesus his consolation. Now, consider this hymn with me in verses 29-32. Start by focusing on the first part, in verses 29-30. Simeon receives the Christ into his arms, the consolation he was waiting for, and pronounces “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word.” There is an instant acknowledgement of dying in peace because the Lord fulfilled his promised word. The next line of his poetry, in verse 30, builds on the first, providing the reason for this peace. He says, “for my eyes have seen your salvation.” This peace, this consolation, comes from the sight of the salvation of the Lord. The name given this child was Jesus, meaning Yahweh is salvation, and this child was proclaimed to be the Savior by the angels in the field. So when Simeon sees him, he rightfully says he has seen God’s salvation. And as we follow the flow of this narrative, and the connections Luke has made, we see that this salvation is describing the consolation of verse 25. Before we continue on, consider the faith of Simeon here. How many people do we see in the gospels that look on the man, Jesus Christ, see his power, hear His teaching, and never see him as God’s salvation? But, when Simeon sees the child, he beholds the glory of Christ and believes. All it takes for Simeon is a taste of salvation for him to have peace, because by the power of the Spirit, he looks forward to what this salvation is. Which brings me to the second thing this hymn shows us, that

THE CONSOLATION IS FOR ALL PEOPLES

Verse 31 says this is a salvation, “that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.” Now, Hebrew poetry is crafted by stating ideas in two or three parallel lines that work together. The second line points back to the first to complete it by restating it, contrasting with it, or enhancing it in some way. This song is given in the Hebrew poetic form with Verses 31 and 32 stating one idea. Verse 31 reveals that salvation has been “prepared in the presence of all peoples” and verse 32 expounds on what that means. Pay attention to the flow of this, and then focus in on verse 32. Start back in verse 29, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” Verse 32 shows that Gentiles and Israel make up the “all peoples” of verse 31. And as one commentary notes, “It was rare in any genre of ancient literature to see Gentiles and Jews placed in positive apposition [or harmony] to one another, and rarer still to see Gentiles mentioned before Israel.” When Luke puts “a light of revelation to the Gentiles” first he is drawing in the truths of Isaiah 42:6, where God says, “I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations.” And Isaiah 49:6, which says, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” The Bible consistently reveals that the nation of Israel was never the culmination of God’s revelation, but always intended to be a light for all nations to see the glory of God. So, Simeon, full of the Spirit, rightfully proclaims that Christ, God’s true servant, would be “a light of revelation for the Gentiles,” or nations. He is the promised offspring of Abraham, as Galatians 3:16 shows, who would reveal the salvation and glory of God to the nations. In fact, even the term used for salvation has a unique role in Luke’s writings. This term is used 3 times by Luke, and only one other time in the New Testament.

Luke uses it here in verse 30, another time in Luke 3:6, one other time at the very end of Acts, in Acts 28:28, where Paul says to the Jewish leaders, “let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles.” Luke ensures we understand the salvation, or consolation, of God is for the Gentiles. But, this doesn’t mean God is done with the Jews, because the “all peoples” includes the Jews. At the end of verse 22, Luke says “and for glory to your people Israel.” This glory is what is spoken of in Isaiah 60:1, which says, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” The significance of this salvation is not just that Christ would bring revelation to the Gentiles, but Christ would have God’s glory rise upon Israel. Glory and revelation, in the poetry here, are in harmonious words. The intent is to communicate they are congruent with each other. You see Israel, as God’s covenant people, had already received the divine revelation of the glory of God coming, and were waiting for its manifestation. When Simeon sees Christ, He sees the salvation of God as being the revelation God’s glory to the Gentiles and the manifestation of His glory previously revealed to Israel. This is what causes him to conclude that God’s salvation has been “prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” The consolation is for all peoples. The comfort and hope is for all peoples. This salvation is for all peoples.

Conclusion:

To have this settle rightly on our hearts today, we need to know what this salvation is, how it is secured, and where it finds its culmination. First, know that

JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS

In Matthew 1:21, when the angel appeared to Joseph to tell him of the child Mary would give birth to, the angel told Joseph to call his name Jesus because, “he will save his people from their sins.” As the book of Acts later records the gospel spreading, Paul stands before King Agrippa in Acts 26 recounting his call for Jews and Gentiles to “repents and turn to God.” And he concludes his remarks in Acts 26:22-23, showing that he was “saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” The suffering and resurrection of Christ was the means by which Jesus would proclaim “light both to our people [Israel] and to the Gentiles.” And Paul later proclaims to the church in Corinth what is of first importance in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins, to secure our salvation, because what we needed was the forgiveness of our sin. His death, burial, and resurrection revealed that His work on the cross satisfied the wrath of God to save us from the penalty of sin. That is the salvation Simeon foresaw. That is the consolation spoke of in Isaiah 40, the pardoning of sin for all who believe. Have you received pardon for your sin? Have you seen the light of Christ’s glory and embraced His work on the cross? If not, see God’s salvation today. But, where does this salvation, this consolation, find its culmination?

OUR FINAL CONSOLATION COMES AT THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

Hebrews 9:26-28 reveals that Christ suffered once for all “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself... so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. There is final day of judgment coming and, on that day, those who are eagerly waiting for Christ will receive the consummation of their salvation. Our longing will end, and like Simeon, we will embrace the glory of Jesus and find our eternal rest. Our full and everlasting comfort and hope will be realized in a way that will satisfy our hearts for all of eternity. This is the ultimate purpose of celebrating Advent every year, to build in our hearts an anticipation for our final consolation. If you are trusting in Christ today, are you eagerly waiting for Him to return?

Let me encourage you to think on the salvation Christ secured on the cross, and have it point you to a future manifestation comfort and the joy of His presence that will cause your heart to sing for all of eternity. We are going to end our time today in a unique way today. My favorite Christmas hymn to sing every year is "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus." I love this hymn because it reminds me of the anticipation of Christ's first coming. Several years back, Holly and I wrote an additional verse together to add in the longing and anticipation our hearts should feel towards Christ's second coming. I would like to close our time this morning by singing this hymn and extra verse together. Before we sing, let me share the words of the third verse with you.

Come Lord quickly to relieve us, dealing death its final blow

By Thy might to reign victorious, bringing heav'n to earth below

O to see the King of Glory, coming in the clouds with speed

To fulfill redemption's story, man for - ever to dwell with Thee

Please stand with me and let's pray?