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Luke 2:21-40

Tired Eyes, Wrinkled Hands

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. ²²When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons." ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ²⁹"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ^{32a}a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." ³³The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." ³⁶There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. ³⁹When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Simeon and Anna had been watching, hoping, expecting – waiting for a long time. Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel. Anna waited for the redemption of Judah. Simeon was known in Jerusalem for his goodness and fairness. He was a faithful worshiper at the temple. God had promised him that before he died, he would see the Messiah. Simeon waited with the faithfulness of a soldier on guard. Anna was 84 years old. She was a daughter of the tribe of Asher. Some say that women of that tribe were the prettiest of all. Once she had been a wife, but her husband had died seven years after they had been married. She spent every day and every night in the temple praying. Both Simeon and Anna waited a long time. They had tired eyes and wrinkled hands.

I imagine it was difficult for both of them to wait as long as they did. I get tired of waiting in a fast food line. That only takes a few minutes. They waited years. They had to endure doubt. They had to endure the death of parents, spouses, and friends. It is hard to wait.

All of this changed when Jesus was presented in the temple. You can catch the excitement as Simeon rushes up to Jesus, takes him in his arms, and says, "Sovereign 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" (2:29-32).

"Now" - The most important word in this passage is the word "now." After years of waiting, now is the time. Now it has happened. Now your promise is reality. Now comfort has come. Now the Messiah is here. You should have seen Abigail on Christmas morning. She woke up. We she walked to our room. She asked, "Is it Christmas?" We said yes it is. Now it is Christmas. Now you can open your presents.

Israel waited for the now. In fact, circumcision on the eighth day was a symbol of the eighth day (or the first day of the new week) in which God would make everything new. The Transfiguration and Resurrection also occurred on the eighth day.

"Dismiss your servant in peace" - Most interpret these words as "now I can die in peace." However, the literal reading is to "set free" I like this better because in his arms is the one who will set him free from sin, death, and the devil. Only the resurrection can bring true peace.

"The light of revelation to the Gentiles" - As these words are spoken, foreign Magi were following a star so that they could pay tribute to Jesus. Jesus, the way, the truth, and the light begins to shine in this dark world so that all might come to the father.

"Glory to your people Israel" - God's glory visibly dwelt over the ark and the tabernacle to guide Israel in the wilderness (Ex 40:34-38). After the priests processed with the ark to the newly built Jerusalem temple, God took up residence there (1Kings 8). Shortly before the first temple was destroyed, Ezekiel saw God's glory leave it (Ezekiel 10). After the exile, the rebuilt second temple lacked the glory of the first temple (Ezra 6:13-18), but God promised one day to fill it with even greater glory of the first temple (Haggai 2:1-9; Zech 8-9). That promise comes to fulfillment here, when the "King of glory" comes in (Ps 24:7-10), and the Lord himself comes to his temple (Mal 3:1).

It is amazing to think that Jesus was the greater glory. I image this was not what Simeon was expecting. Without the Holy Spirit, he would not have believed. How could he? Jesus' parents were poor. They could not pay the normal offering of a lamb. Instead, there could only offer two doves. But that is the point. Jesus came to turn everything upside down.

The first glory was a glory that one could see but could not touch. There was no access to God. Now, God is accessible. In Christ, the temple curtain is torn. In Christ, people can lay hold of God. In Christ, there is forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Jesus was born in a manger so that we would have a place in the inn. Jesus was wrapped in swaddling cloths so that we would be wrapped in the cloths of his righteousness. Jesus was rejected so that we would be accepted. Jesus thirst so that we could drink everlasting water. Jesus died so that we would live.

This is why Mary's soul would be pierced. Many in Israel would not and could believe that God was working in this way. But many others did believe. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God... born not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).*

Reformation, the wait is both over and it continues. We no longer wait for salvation. Christ came. Christ defeated sin, death, and the devil. We are redeemed. Our life is hidden in Christ. Instead, we wait for the resurrection. We wait for the party. We wait for the one who turns water into wine. We wait for the one who kills the fatted calf for the prodigal son. It will be a glorious day when the Father says, "Now it is time!"

Until that day, come to the Lord's Table to receive a foretaste of the feast to come.

**In Jesus Name,
Amen**