

Thank God for Sending the Savior!

- ✦ He brings us consolation in sorrow. (vv.25-35)
- ✦ He gives us full and free redemption. (vv.36-40)

In the Name of Jesus our newborn Savior, dear rejoicing Christians:

How was your Christmas this year? A Hallmark Hall of Fame? Solved with a kiss at the end? Or were you asking questions like those in a letter shared by our District President Charlie Degner? “My good friend, Don Patterson, sent me this email last week and it encouraged me...I need to send this to the brothers and sisters in the district to encourage them. So your Christmas message from me is not original – except that it does come from my heart. Jesus bless every one of you and your families with the peace that only God’s gift of Jesus can give us.” Don Patterson wrote:

As of late I have been pondering how ironical it is that the baby who brought peace on earth also was the catalyst for Herod to kill all the other cute little boys who were born at the same time. Why does it always have to be this way; joy smeared with sorrow, singing crowded by crying, angels rejoicing while Rachel weeps?

Why is it that every Christmas some family or church member is dying, or lays deathly ill or is wacked out of their minds with anxiety or strife? Why does the peace of Christmas bring with it the stress of planning activities?

Maybe you also have a few regrets about your own anger and frustration that felt nowhere close to Christmas. Why is heartache so common at Christmas? It’s in all the characters of our text: an old man, a lifelong widow, parents, the Child. But with all of them we **Thank God for Sending the Savior!**

✦ He brings us consolation in sorrow. (vv.25-35)

The Child Jesus was only eight days old when He shed His first blood as our Savior. “*After eight days passed, when the child was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*” (v.21)¹ And then when Jesus was forty days old, His parents took Him to the temple to present Him to the Lord as the firstborn son and offer the poor people’s sacrifice of “*a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*” Maybe mother Mary and stepfather Joseph felt pretty good.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.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.²⁷ Moved by the Spirit he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary according to the law,²⁸ Simeon took him into his arms and praised God. He said,²⁹ “Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word,³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,³¹ which you have prepared before the face of all people,³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.

How could old man Simeon still be bearing fruit in old age with such public praises of God? It says he was “*moved by the Spirit.*” With the eyes of faith Simeon could see Jesus as **the Savior**, not only of the world, but of him. Simeon’s song we call the *Nunc Dimittis* (Latin “you dismiss”) and sing it as our song of thanksgiving after we take Jesus into our mouths and hearts in His Holy Supper. With the eyes of

¹ W.P. ~ Wartburg Project – Luke popular review (w/o footnotes) – unless otherwise stated the Bible text. [M.C. 12/27/2014]

faith we too see Jesus as the world's Savior, yes! But best of all as our own Savior. As I say to you, so the Elder says to me, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." What relief from hurt! What soothing from sin! What strength to live another day to the glory of God and the aid of our neighbor.

Joseph and Mary were amazed. We know how the story goes. They did not yet understand how Jesus' life would unfold. But the Holy Spirit revealed this to Simeon who *blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Listen carefully. This child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against,*³⁵ *so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."* Mary would have about thirty-three years to wonder about that until she saw her Son and Savior hanging on the cross. A sword through the soul – why such Christmas heartache?

✦ **He gives us full and free redemption. (vv.36-40)**

Hurting for decades: *"Anna, a prophetess, was there, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. She had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage,*³⁷ *and then she was a widow of eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple, since she was worshiping with fasting and prayers night and day.*³⁸ *Standing nearby at that very hour, she gave thanks to the Lord. She kept speaking about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem."*

At her age, how could Anna still be encouraging everyone? She also had Simeon's hope. Not "North Pole hope" that things will turn around, good presents will appear, people will straighten out, laws will change. Anna was *"waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem"* when God would buy them back from sin. God gave Anna the eyes of faith to see this hope in the little Child from Bethlehem.

He gives us full and free redemption. Jesus did not come because of Simeon's praise or Anna's worship. He came because God the Father *"loved the world so much that He gave His one and only begotten Son in order that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16 TPA) Instead of dwelling on their losses and disappointments, Simeon and Anna were busy praising God for His grace in Christ. They minimized their troubles and magnified the Lord deep down inside their souls. And the Holy Spirit did not disappoint them, but kept on showing them more reasons for thanks and giving them more power for praise.

That's what Jesus was all about too. His mission was to live and die and live again as our Substitute, our Savior from sin, death and hell. But what gave Jesus courage and overflowing joy? Jesus was living to please and glorify His heavenly Father. So when Mary and Joseph *"had accomplished everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town, Nazareth.*⁴⁰ *The child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him."* That's how our children grow up in Jesus too – Christmas and always.

Hurt at Christmas? Pastor Patterson's answer helps us **Thank God for Sending the Savior:**

Why? because we are in the church militant. We are taking the hill! We are defending the glory of God and living on a mission to disciple the planet! The prince of the power of the air is still prowling around looking for someone to devour. And we are the Shepherds protecting the flock.

What God wants us to take from the Christmas story is: 1) the confidence of salvation from this one baby, 2) the trust that his Father still sends angels to guide us around the enemy's plots and 3) the peace of a heart resolved in grace, so that we can be the robust, healthy soldiers, who occupy enemy territory and bring rescue to people wiped out by sin...God was born to save!!!! Take the hill my friend! And take heart, you are already redeemed from your failure to do this job perfectly. As Paul said, "Our competence comes from God." (2 Corinthians 3:5) Amen.