

**Luke 2:25–40** Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, waiting for the comfort of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup>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, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him into his arms and praised God. He said,

<sup>29</sup>Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word,

<sup>30</sup>because my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared before the face of all people,

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.

<sup>33</sup>Joseph and the child's mother were amazed at the things that were spoken about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon 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, <sup>35</sup>so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

<sup>36</sup>Anna, a prophetess, was there. She was 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, <sup>37</sup>and then she was a widow of eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple complex, since she was worshipping with fasting and prayers night and day. <sup>38</sup>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.

<sup>39</sup>When they had accomplished everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town, Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>The child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Christmas is over. And as our eyes turn to the end of the old year and the start of the new, all that planning and preparation, all that food and all those presents — it's all behind us now. Maybe your head is still spinning from it all. Maybe you're glad it's all over so things can get back to normal. On the other hand there's always a part of us that is sad when the calendar turns to December 26th, wishing we could hold on to that Christmas spirit,

Christmas music, Christmas nostalgia, those Christmas feelings hope, peace, joy and love a little longer.

Well, God's Word before us this morning reminds us of two people who will help us carry the true spirit of Christmas with us, even as Christmas comes to an end and as we look forward to the end of the old year and the start of the new.

First, with Simeon. Simeon was a righteous and devout man who was probably familiar to many. He was special. God had revealed to him that he would not see death until he had seen the Christ. It was not a coincidence that he was at the temple when Jesus was brought in 40 days after his birth. The Holy Spirit directed him to be there because this was the day God's promise to Simeon would be fulfilled — he would see the Christ.

And we might think that it would have been a little sad for Simeon, because with God's promise to him complete, the Christ-child seen, now he would die. Not right then and there, but the first part was complete, the second part would naturally follow.

But we don't see Simeon desperately clinging to the security he was leaving behind, the peace that he had knowing he would not die until he saw the Christ. Now that was gone and as he looked forward to what he now knew the future held, still, even more so, he was at peace. **Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace...**

Not peace knowing that he would not die. Greater peace knowing that he would now live! **According to your Word my eyes have seen your salvation.** In his arms he was holding the one who would secure his future, his eternal life, his salvation, ultimate, true, and lasting peace.

Are you at peace as you take your eyes off Christmas and things get back to normal? Are you at peace as you leave 2020 behind and look to 2021? Are you at peace not only with all that happened in 2020 on the national and global scene, but also with what transpired in your life?

At times we find ourselves desperately clinging to what once was, looking back to the "peace" that once was, before this happened, or that. Had Simeon looked back to the worldly peace, fulfillment and security he once had, he would have missed the ultimate, true, and lasting peace right in front of him. And that's Satan's goal for you and me. To dazzle us with all the trimmings and fixings, this world's supposed peace and security, because he knows they aren't going to last. But if he can get us to put our hope in those things that don't last, when they're gone, he can swoop in

and with a 1-2 punch and say, “See you don’t have peace, and on top of that you are full of sin.” He steals away our hope and covers us in guilt.

But that’s why God’s gift to us at Christmas lasts even as another Christmas ends and as we begin a new year where Christmas is a year away again.

God’s gift to us of his one and only Son fills us with true and lasting peace, which not even the devil can take away or diminish. Because Jesus lived a perfect life for us and in our place. We see that here today, that’s why he was circumcised on the 8th day and why his parents brought him back to the temple on the 40th day. Jesus was there fulfilling God’s law for us, already laying down that record of perfection in our place. So when Satan tries to rob us of our peace — sure Christmas is over, 2021 may be as bad as 2020, the normalcy of 2019 is already a year in the past — and yes, we are sinful and do find ourselves longing for the worldly peace and security we once knew — but Jesus is still our Savior. Jesus’ perfection covers over a multitude of sin. And God’s wrath and punishment, the agony of hell we deserve because of our sins, that’s what Jesus went on to endure on the cross for the sins of the world, making Jesus what Simeon said: **a light for the gentiles and the glory of Israel.**

Oh, Simeon knew what was in store for this infant he was holding in his arms, even if Mary had not fully grasped it. **Simeon 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,<sup>35</sup>so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”**

Blood, suffering, and death for the sins of the world. But through that blood, suffering, and death, Satan was defeated, his words deflected, his accusations deflated.

So, though the Christmas songs fall silent again, the decorations are boxed again, the tree is down again, the lights are wound up again, the toys are put away again, the cookie jar is empty again, because of that baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger, we can depart this season in peace again.

And though the year wasn’t what we ever thought 2020 would be, with the proof of just how much God loves, us, he sent his Son, God became a man, not for a season or a year, but for a lifetime, we can depart this year in peace.

And since that boy grew up to be our Savior, who lived and died for us to take away our sins, and also rose from the dead, we can be assured, we are ready, as Simeon, whenever the Lord wills it, to depart this world in peace.

Until that day, how should we spend our time? I said we would talk about two people, so let’s talk a little about Anna. She spent her time at the temple, praying and fasting and speaking to everyone about Jesus. And can’t you just picture her there, beaming like a grandmother about her grandson, though Jesus was so much more!

Is that what we should do? Spend every waking moment at church telling people about Jesus? It wouldn’t really be feasible in our situations, nor is it what God calls us to do. Yes he calls each of us to share the gospel, but he also has called us to support our families and give our time to helping others. God gave Anna the opportunity to do what she did, and the gifts to do them — she was called a prophetess, after all. That was her calling, that’s what she did.

In your calling what opportunities has God given you to share this news of the baby Jesus? It’s not always easy because we’re up against the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, the unholy trinity against any mention of the Gospel or anything Jesus has done.

Sometimes the daunting part about speaking our faith is our focus on the other person — what if they say this, what if they do that, what if I don’t know what to say? But look at Anna. She was speaking about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. She focused, not on the people, but on what they were looking for. All of them were waiting for something, looking for something and she had the answer. She couldn’t keep quiet. She had to tell them.

Everyone, whether they know it or not, is looking for salvation. The fear of judgment before God is common to mankind. If they say they don’t have it, they will one day. No matter who they are, no matter how they respond, no matter what they think of us or what we say, they’re looking for something, and we’ve got the answer.

That answer is the greatest news in all the world. That’s why Anna couldn’t help herself. She *kept* speaking about the child to all. And you can just picture her, this widow speaking about child with such seriousness, such adoration, such amazement. It might have sounded strange, this old widow, speaking about someone else’s child this way. But when they understood who the child was and what he had come to do it wasn’t strange any longer, but the most natural thing in the world.

Sharing the news of God becoming man to redeem man back to God. And there he is! That baby there, he is the one. Come and see!

May God bless us not only with the opportunities to share the gospel with those around us, but also the courage to take the opportunities when the times come.

Christmas is over. The decorations are going to come down. Things are going to be back to...how they were before Christmas. So may our prayer be this: May our lives be filled with the song of Simeon and news of Anna, the peace of Christmas, and the story of Jesus, to have and to hold, and to share today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen.