

“What Are You Waiting For?”

December 31, 2017

**Our Savior’s Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Justin Kumfer**

“For Zion’s sake I won’t keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I won’t sit still until her righteousness shines out like a light, and her salvation blazes like a torch. Nations will see your righteousness, all kings your glory. You will be called by a new name, which the Lord’s own mouth will determine.” Isaiah 62:1-2

Well, Christmas is over. How was your Christmas? Did you get time to spend with family and friends? Were you able to open presents? Did you come and praise God in worship this Christmas? I hope you were able to do all these things. Now we come to the end of the year. This is the last day of 2017. Tomorrow you’ll have to start writing 2018 every time you write the date. Today in fact is a very seldom occurrence. It’s one of the few times that December 31st, the last day of the year occurs on a Sunday. The next time won’t be until 2023.

This marks the special opportunity for us to end the year in worship and begin looking ahead to what the next year will bring. As we look ahead, we often think about our New Year’s resolutions. Who here has a New Year’s resolution in mind? Who here wants to do something different in the New Year, but isn’t sure what to do? It seems like most everyone wants to do something different the next year. So, I have just one question for you. What are you waiting for?

In our readings for today we encounter two individuals who have been waiting for something. In fact, they’ve been waiting for the same thing but they experience it with different perspectives.

The first person we meet is Simeon. Now, many people believe Simeon to be an old man who is longing to die based on what he says, but if we take a closer look at the text we don't know for sure how old Simeon was. All we know for sure is that he was waiting. Luke chapter 2 verse 25 tells us, "Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him."

Right away what we learn about Simeon is that he is waiting for something called the consolation of Israel. Consolation means comfort, usually received after a loss or disappointment. If we connect this back to what Simeon is waiting for we are led to believe that Simeon is the embodiment of Israel waiting for the Messiah to come after the loss we experienced in the Garden of Eden, when man first sinned and lost closeness with God. The loss and disappointment Israel had been experiencing was coming to an end.

You don't have to raise your hands for this one, but how many of you felt loss or disappointment over the past year? How many of you are waiting for consolation, waiting for comfort?

Simeon was waiting and when Jesus entered, he stopped. He went to the child, picked him up in his arms, and blessed God. His waiting was over. He saw the consolation that came from God. Even though Jesus was still a baby, Simeon saw everything that He would accomplish. Jesus would bring comfort to the people. He would bring healing and forgiveness. Simeon's blessing is one we still use in worship today called the Nunc Dimittis. Usually it is sung upon the end of the worship service as we leave the Lord's Table after communion. We ask to depart in peace because we have seen Jesus, the salvation of all people.

With Christmas so close to us, it makes me think of the angels. Here Simeon had been waiting for salvation, just as the angels had been waiting for God to send salvation to us. Simeon takes the place of the Christmas angels in this passage, telling the people who had come and what He came to do. Instead of "Glory to God in the highest" he shouts, "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.”

The message of Christ is still for all the people. Not as something coming, but as the one who has come for our comfort. For our consolation. For our salvation. He brings peace and joy, and new life.

So I ask you again, what are you waiting for?

Simon is not the only one we see waiting in this passage, however. There is another. Her name is Anna. She is a prophetess. Unlike Simeon we are told that she was an older woman who had experienced much hardship. She was married and lived with her husband for only seven years before he was gone. Since that time she had been living alone and is now 84 years old. Her life was marked with hardship. But during that time, she worshipped God. Despite all that had happened to her, she worshipped and praised, and prayed and fasted before God night and day in the temple. And then she saw Jesus.

Once she did, her sorrow was gone and she came up to the family of Jesus and thanked God and spoke of the one who had come to everyone who was waiting for the redemption that had been promised to them.

Just as Simeon took the place of the angels, Anna takes the position of the shepherds. People who had great need. The need of a savior. The need of a comforter. The need that was met in Jesus. Just as the shepherds went out praising God and telling everyone what they had seen and heard, Anna did the same. “She began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” Her waiting was over. Once she had seen the salvation, she couldn’t stop herself from spreading the good news.

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!?!

You too have seen the salvation of God. You have seen Jesus, you know who He is, you know what He came to do, and more so, you have seen Him complete His work on earth. Simeon and Anna only physically saw the beginning. They saw the baby Jesus. But you... You have seen the Risen Christ. The comforter who came and died for the sins of all people.

The Christ who healed, and forgave, and brought about new life for all believers!

What more is there to wait for? There is still hardship and trouble. But above that, more powerful than that, there is Christ. Christ who came at Christmas and restored the paradise God had begun in Eden. Christ who took on humanity and lived like us. Christ who died and suffered for us. Christ who was raised again for all people.

That's what Simeon and Anna were waiting for. And once they saw even the smallest glimpse of what Jesus came to do, they praised God. They weren't waiting any longer. Instead they were moving and telling and praising God.

For one final time I ask you, "What are you waiting for?"

You have seen Christ. You have heard about His marvelous deeds. Now is the time to stop waiting and get moving. Now is the time to go. Tomorrow begins a new year. And I pray that it bring about a new life in you. One that is given to you through the work of Christ. One that enables you to end your waiting and change the world, as Isaiah reminds us, "For Zion's sake I won't keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I won't sit still until her righteousness shines out like a light, and her salvation blazes like a torch. Nations will see your righteousness, all kings your glory. You will be called by a new name, which the Lord's own mouth will determine." The Lord has indeed given you this new name. A name which he calls you now. He says, "You are mine."

On account of Jesus' name, Amen!