

Luke 2:25-40

Those of you who were present at our worship service on Christmas Day had the opportunity to sing a variety of different **Christmas carols**. Christmas is the one time of year when songs like “Angels From The Realms of Glory,” “O Come All Ye Faithful,” “O Little Town Of Bethlehem,” “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” and others actually **fit in** with the texts and theme of our worship. Today we’re going to be looking at **another** carol - however, this one is suitable for use not only at **Christmas** time, but **all year long**. It’s **Simeon’s Carol To The Christ Child**. Today we’ll be looking more deeply at the **significance** of this carol for us. And in order to do that, we need to examine two questions: First of all, **who** was **Simeon**, and secondly, **what** was his **carol**?

Who was **Simeon**? I’m sure that as you think about the Bible stories which you learned in Sunday School or Lutheran Elementary School concerning the circumcision of Jesus and His presentation in the temple, that you probably have some sort of a visual picture of Simeon in your mind’s eye. I know **I** do. But, before we investigate the **accuracy** of those pictures, I should probably clear up any false ideas which you may have regarding **when** the events of our text took place.

We know that Jesus was **circumcised** when He was **eight** days old, in keeping with God’s Old Testament law. Since the events of our text are found in the verses of Luke 2 which immediately **follow** Jesus’ circumcision, that might lead us to believe that all these things also took place when Jesus was only eight days old. But they **didn’t**. In Leviticus Chapter 12, God informs us of His ceremonial laws concerning the time of purification for a **mother** after child-birth, as well as the presentation of her **child** in the temple. In the case of a **son**, these both took place when the child was **40 days old**. So, that’s when our text takes place.

Now, getting back to **Simeon**, how had you pictured him? I always thought of Simeon as being like someone’s **great-grandfather** - a very **old** man with a long white **beard** - maybe he was even the **priest** to whom Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to present Him to the LORD. Traditionally, we think of Simeon as being **old** - maybe in part because our text also tells us that the prophetess **Anna**, who was **also** there, was **very** old. As a child, I also thought of Simeon and Anna as a **couple** - but they weren’t even necessarily together. They were just both at the temple at the same time. So many of those **traditional** thoughts about Simeon are based only on **assumptions**. Listen closely to what the

Bible actually **tells** us about Simeon. *“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. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see **death** before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”* And that’s **all** it says. It **doesn’t** say that he was **old**, nor does it say that he was a **priest**. It doesn’t say he was married to **Anna**. Simeon could easily have been just an average, everyday, ordinary guy - maybe like your next door **neighbor** at home. Yet, God had a special **task** for him to carry out.

Believe it or not, even today God uses average, everyday, ordinary people like Simeon - and as He did with Simeon, He uses them for **outstanding** purposes. God uses children and adults, professionals and day laborers, businessmen and homemakers - but He doesn’t use them all in the **same** way. God, in His great **wisdom**, has given to each of us our own **special** way or ways to serve Him. And in His great **power**, God has also provided us with the **desire** and the **talents** we need, in order to **complete** our service to Him.

Just look at Simeon. How could he be so **patient** to wait for the consolation of Israel? How would he know when the time was **just right** for its arrival? How would he know **where to go** to find the **comfort** he was seeking? And how would he know **what to say** when he did find it? Simeon was confident that God would **provide** him with all the answers he needed. And what about you? What difficult things is God asking **you** to deal with? Do any of **these** seem fitting? - How will you ever learn to **share**? - How will you ever make it through the **5th grade**? - How will you ever go on living after being **dumped** by a boyfriend or girlfriend? - How will you be able to make ends meet after being laid off from your job? - How will you be able to **patch up** your rapidly deteriorating **marriage**? - How will you handle a **midlife crisis**? - How will you deal with the **loneliness** of growing **old**? My dear friends, as your lives go on, there will **always** be problems. Over the years, our problems will certainly **change** - but the **solution** to those problems continues to remain the **same**. Turn to **God** and His **Word**, and He will **provide** all the answers we need.

Simeon is described as being **righteous** and **devout**. That means that whether he was young or old, he was about as fine a man as you could ever hope to meet. And what was this godly man **doing**? He was **waiting** - just **waiting** - **waiting** for the comfort of Israel, because that’s what the Holy Spirit had **told** him to do. You know, when you stop to **think** about it, **comfort** only becomes important when times are **bad** - and the times surrounding the birth of Jesus were **very** bad indeed. There was the political suppression of the **Romans**, there was

cruel **King Herod**, and there were the legalistic **scribes** and **Pharisees**. Besides all that, God's people hadn't heard from one of His **prophets** in over 400 years! We all **hate** to **wait** - and Simeon could easily have **complained** about how God had made him **wait** for the coming of that comfort. But instead, he drew **strength** - strength from **God**, and strength from His **Word**. Simeon waited **patiently**. And the comfort which he found was definitely **worth** the wait.

Well, that was **Simeon** - a man who was highly **honored** by God, and a man who was highly **blessed** by God. But what was the **carol** which he offered to the Christ Child? Certainly we could look at his exemplary **life**, and the way he used his **talents** to carry out the responsibilities which God had given to him. We could say that his entire **life** was a song of joy and praise to the Lord - and we would be **right** in doing so. But in Simeon's case there is even **more**. Simeon told us about the value and importance of the **comfort of Israel** with the words of his Song. Perhaps you didn't recognize it in the Evangelical Heritage Version of the Bible, but today when you get home, if you open your hymnals to the liturgy on **page 24**, you will find it in its more familiar form: *"Lord, now you let Your servant depart in peace according to Your Word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."* Another less used version can also be found on **page 61** of Christian Worship. Since we sing this Song of Simeon in many of our **communion** services after we have received the **Lord's Supper**, we don't usually think of it as a **carol** to the Christ Child, but it **is**. It is **Simeon's Carol To The Christ Child** - a song of **joy** and a song of **praise**.

Through his words, Simeon showed that he knew what Christmas is all about. It's about a **promise** - and how God **fulfilled** that promise by sending His **Son**. When Simeon took Jesus into his arms and saw that God had **kept** His promise - whether he was a **young** man, or whether he was an **old** man - he was ready to **die**! There was nothing else **missing** in his life. There was nothing else for which to **wait**.

Year after year, so many people are anxiously **waiting** for **Christmas** to arrive - because Christmas is viewed as a "magical" time of year - a time when everyone is **happy**, and when things are just as they **should** be. That is, unless Christmas time has brought **tragedy** into their lives, as it often **does**. Think about those families who have experienced a disastrous **house** fire, or a **car accident** or an **airplane crash** which took the life of a close **friend** or **relative**. Think about those families who went to church on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, only to come home and find that their house had been **ransacked**, and all their presents

had been **stolen**. Think about those people whose spouse was **cheating** on them, whose bills were **too big** to be covered by their paychecks, or who received a **pink slip** from their boss instead of a Christmas **bonus**. Think about those people who are currently suffering with **COVID-19**. For them, Christmas is **not** very magical - at least not in the **short** term.

And yet, in the **long-range** scheme of things, the **true** meaning and magic of Christmas still comes through. After all, what is it that **causes** disastrous fires, and car accidents, plane crashes, and viruses? What is it that **causes** the breakup of marriages, and all kinds of other family crises? What is it that **causes** the wars, and murders, and terrorism throughout the world? It's **sin**, isn't it! If we didn't have any **sin** in the world, we wouldn't have **those** or any **other** problems. And isn't that **exactly** why we have Christmas? Isn't that what Christmas is **really** all about? God sent His **Son** into this world to carry out His plan to **remove** the punishment of **sin** from our lives. That is our **true** comfort - the **real** comfort which we receive from the Babe of Bethlehem. That's what we **wait** so anxiously to hear **every year** at Christmas time.

So, whether you spent the holidays with your **relatives**, or close **friends**, or all **alone** - whether your Christmas **turkey** was roasted to perfection, or you had to eat **burnt offerings** - whether you received all the presents which you **hoped** for and **asked** for, or there was **little** or **nothing** at all under your Christmas tree - in fact, even if you just experienced some major **difficulty** or **tragedy** in your life - as **Christians**, your Christmas was a very **blessed** one. After all, **Jesus** was **born** on Christmas Day - born to bring us deliverance from **sin** and all its **effects** - a gift for which we owe God our undying **praise** and **glory**. As Simeon said in our text, He is "*A Light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to Your people Israel.*"

Mary and Joseph **marveled** at those words when they were spoken, and **we** should too - because they are truly **marvelous** words. They are words which enable us to look **past** the tragedies, the disappointments, and the setbacks of **this** life - and to look **forward**, as Simeon did, to **leaving** this life for a **better** one in **heaven**. May God grant that our Christmas celebrations are always **far-sighted**, rather than **short-sighted**. May our holidays always go **beyond** the outward happy faces, **beyond** the family gatherings, **beyond** the gift giving. May our Christmases always center around that 40-day old **Child** whom Simeon saw - because He is **Jesus**, the **fulfillment** of God's promise to provide eternal **salvation** - for **us**, and for the whole **world**. Amen.