

Waiting for Advent - Kevin Miller, 30 minutes, **Luke 2:25-35** (#541)

Introduction: Merry Christmas! I trust that you had a wonderful day yesterday as you focused on the birthday of our Savior. As a child, Christmas was always hard for me to wait for. I loved being out of school for a couple of weeks, traveling to see family in far off places, the snow, the annual Christmas program. There was something magical to it all! As I grew older, I learned more of what it means to not just have some fun in the here and now, but more importantly, to celebrate the gift of Christ given to me, as underserving as I was and am.

Yet, while I truly do hope that this has been a time of drawing near to the Lord for you and your families, I realize that – for at least a few of you – Christmas also brings up painful reminders. Perhaps this was the first Christmas without a beloved family member. Maybe you have painful memories of family events in the past that embarrassed you. Perhaps you have endured real struggles around this time of year that make it especially difficult to enjoy. All of these – and many others – are the hardships of living between two advents. On the one hand, Christmas celebrates Christ's first advent: His arrival here on earth, having taken on flesh. But that isn't the only advent we care about. We await a second one: Christ's return to rule and to reign, to set all things right. To usher all of His people into a Kingdom where there will be no more sadness, no more wounds, no more crying, no more death. Oh, that will be a day every bit as joyful as this first advent!

Today, I'd like to stick with the theme of Christmas and remind us from **Luke 2** what it was like to await the coming of Christ, to wait on God's promises. Then, we'll read what it was like to see the Lord at work. This will give us the encouragement and strength we need to marvel at what our Lord has done while

we wait for the completion of what He will do. Join me in **Luke 2, verse 25** and we'll be refreshed from God's Word together...

2:25-28 We begin our story in the middle of a paragraph, I realize. I'd certainly encourage you to read all of **Luke** up to this point. What has come before is all the preparation – all of the promise – that has led up to Christ's birth. The early verses of this chapter preserve the record of that birth for us, and now we turn from mangers and shepherds to the temple of the Lord. Historically, these events would have occurred about forty days after Christ's birth.

Right off the bat, we are introduced to a man named Simeon. Luke tells us several important things about him. First, Simeon is in Jerusalem at the temple. That's perhaps an obvious point, but it shows why Simeon was at just the right place in precisely the right time to be the recipient of God's promises.

Second, we learn something of Simeon's character: he is called righteous and devout. We could spend the entire rest of the sermon describing what those two words mean for a faithful person, but Luke chooses to zero in on two indicators of what this looks like: first, Simeon is waiting for the "consolation of Israel." The Greek word here can also be translated as "comfort," and is in the same category of words that speak of the Holy Spirit as the "comforter" of God's people (**John 14:26**) and of Jesus as the "advocate" of Christians (**1 John 2:1**). So Simeon is waiting for the Old Testament promises of a coming Davidic King. He is trusting that what the Lord had promised long ago – centuries ago! – would prove true. By the way: you think we have it bad when we have to wait for delayed shipping on Christmas gifts? We've never had to wait like Simeon had to! And what's more, even as we wait for Christ's second coming, we at least have the details of His

work. We know who He is and what He has done. We are sitting in a very blessed place compared to the folks of Simeon's era.

The other characteristic noted of this faithful man is that the Holy Spirit was upon him, which tells us a few things. First, that Simeon's belief was real and genuine. He wasn't a cultural Jew. He wasn't the sort who is religious just because his country is religious. No, Simeon genuinely trusted the Lord, and the Holy Spirit's presence is evidence of that. Second, it's also a picture of something special: Luke notes that presence of the Holy Spirit because of what we read of in **verses 26-27**.

In those verses we understand that the Holy Spirit has given knowledge and revelation to Simeon. Specifically, that he would not die until Christ came. How exciting! Whatever else might happen in his life, Simeon knew that he would see the Promised One – isn't that amazing? What a marvelous grace of God: He didn't have to reveal Christ in that way, but He did. And this faithful man, likely an older gentleman, is rewarded to see the arrival of Jesus on earth before he himself dies.

All of which sets us up for the rest of the story: Simeon, filled with and guided by the Spirit, enters the temple, sees Joseph and Mary with Jesus, and takes Christ into his arms to bless the Lord for the fulfilled promise that this baby boy is.

Dear church: I mentioned earlier that we have immense benefits in our waiting. Until the Spirit revealed things to Simeon, he was simply waiting. He didn't have a target date or time, he had far less information than we do. Yet he waited patiently and faithfully. What about you? As we each wait for Christ's second coming, what does your patience look like? Is it characterized by frustration? Or perhaps you don't even think of it much: the return of Christ is such a remote thing to you that

it makes little difference in your daily life – “sure, it’d be great if He comes soon, but if He doesn’t, oh well?” Or, is your waiting characterized by hope, by a sure and certain joy that increases with each day and month? Do you see waiting as part of how God is growing and refining your faith? What would be one or two ways that you could help others in this church to wait well?

Waiting on God’s promise: that was the task for Simeon, it remains the task for us. Next, let’s turn to seeing God’s promise...

2:29-32 These words that Simeon speaks are absolutely amazing. They are both a blessing and a prophecy. In **verse 29**, we see Simeon’s trust and dedication to the Lord on full display: he realizes that this child will mean his own death. Have you ever thought about it in that sense? Yet Simeon doesn’t grieve, instead he blesses. Dare we say: he celebrates! Why? Because Simeon doesn’t seem to fear death – he trusts the Lord, remember? So this moment is not one that will bring fear at his days coming to a close. Instead, it brings joy at seeing the Anointed One, it brings to completion a promise that God had given to him which brought such great hope. That radical trust in the Lord, the confident humility in what God had said – that was what brought Simeon real and genuine peace even as he stared at death. That kind of attitude ought to bring us peace as well.

I’ve always found **verses 30-31** amazing: what Simeon says is far deeper than we might think: he literally sees the fulfillment of God’s promise. It’s not a metaphor – he’s physically holding the Promised One. If you want a good prayer, it might run along these lines: “Lord, strengthen me to trust Your Word until my faith becomes sight.” Friend, if you are in Christ, someday what you hope for is exactly

what you will have and see and hear, because Christ is real: His return is certain, and all who are found in Him shall be saved.

Lastly, in **verse 32** we read something that would have been far more shocking to Luke's earliest readers than it is to us. Remember that the common thought at the time was that God's people consisted of Israel – and only Israel. That His blessing was just for them. That was wrong, and numerous passages from **Isaiah** say so, but nevertheless it was a common thought back then. Here, we clearly read that Jesus didn't come only as the Savior of the Jews. His work wasn't simply to redeem folks from Israel, folks who kept the Law, folks of the right bloodline. No! Instead, this Jesus is the Savior of all who believe: He is a light to the Gentiles (that's you and I!) every bit as much as He is the glory for the people of Israel to respond to.

Brothers and sisters, in a future series we'll explore more of God's heart for the Gentiles. It isn't hard to find in the Scriptures: here, Simeon's blessing picks up on notes from **Isaiah 42:6, 49:6, and 52:10** – and that's only the tip of the iceberg. But for our purposes today, let me draw our attention to who Christ is: He is the light and the glory. He is revealed to people far off, He is the glory for people nearby. Is Jesus your hope? Have you responded to His light? Do you delight to glorify Him? If not, then today can be the most important day of your life: respond to this Jesus. Admit your need for Him as your Savior from sin. Believe that He is the Promised One who has taken away the sins of all who trust Him. And call upon Him as your Lord, giving Him your allegiance as the King of the land that you will someday inhabit forever. That's what it means to come to Christ. If you do that today, then you will get to spend the rest of your life growing in this joy – a joy that you'll relish for eternity. If that's you, then let someone here at the church know: we'd love to pray for you and help you take the next steps to grow in Jesus.

Waiting for God's promise, seeing God's promise. Let's conclude our time with one more picture: marveling at God's promise...

2:33-35 The scene returns to Joseph and Mary, who are apparently standing there, mouths wide open in amazement. I can all but picture the dazed looks they must have had as Simeon continued on: he blesses the parents, and then speaks to Mary of what is coming. It's not only that Jesus' birth is amazing, but all His works will be every bit as amazing too – and heartrending, also, particularly from a mother's perspective with the crucifixion that will mark His work to save His people.

With this, I want to leave us with one further application: the proper response to God's promises, the right way to react to seeing what He has done, is amazement. Too many things in our society try to claim our attention. We've almost become numb to being amazed by much of anything. Tragically, we've even become skeptical, always wondering if reality will hold up to the marketing, or what the catch must be. But friends, with Jesus there is no catch! All that is said in the Word is true. He genuinely is every bit as amazing as the Word portrays Him!

So, as we close our service, it's time to practice some of that amazement right now. Worship not just by reading and singing some words; no, worship from the heart. Let the words we are about to sing lodge deep in your mind. As you sing them out, let it not just be repeating off a screen, but instead telling the truths of God and blessing Him for giving them to us. Then let's go, let's continue to enjoy Christmas, let's look forward to enjoying our Savior forever...