

What a Miracle! Luke 2:25-40
1st Sunday after Christmas 1/1/2012 Pastor Aaron Nitz

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, dear friends in Christ, So much hype and excitement, so much preparation and busyness, and now...it's over, right? It amazes me every year how much anticipation there is for Christmas to come and then a week later it feels like it's all over and done with. Today we can say Christmas was last year. For me and my family, since we traveled to Wisconsin last week, there's over a thousand miles sitting in a car between today and Christmas. The Christmas music has stopped playing. Decorations will soon be coming down, Christmas trees taken out and put by the street or packed up in a box. Perhaps for some Christmas is a once a year ordeal and nothing more. Perhaps many people are glad that it's over and done with. But that's not how it is for us. We've seen the miracles that God has placed before us at Christmas and in our lives. Let us pause this morning and consider some of the life-changing miracles that God has told us about. Our text for this morning contains some of those miracles.

Our text talks about 2 people whom we know literally nothing else about except what is told us in our text. A certain man named Simeon who is described as being "**righteous and devout.**" He was a true Old Testament believer who honestly strove to listen to God's Word and do what God wanted him to do, not because he thought he could earn something from God, but because God had done so much for him in promising him a Savior. "**He was waiting for the consolation of Israel.**" He was waiting for God's promises of a Savior to be fulfilled. He was waiting for the time when the words from Isaiah would be fulfilled, "**Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins**" (Isaiah 40:1-2). Simeon was waiting for a time when his eyes might see the fulfillment of God's salvation and the Savior of the world promised for so long.

And there was an elderly lady name Anna. Again we know of literally nothing else about her except what is given us here. She was quite old and had been a widow for a very long time. She was also very devout. She spent most all of her time worshipping God at the temple. The temple- the very place that symbolized God's presence in and with and among His people. She, like Simeon, longed for The Temple, the fulfillment of the temple, Immanuel, God with us, the Savior, to arrive. She was looking forward to the "**redemption of Israel,**" the One who would come and pay for her sins and make her one with God again.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to be waiting and watching and earnestly wanting the Savior to come? We wait for many different things in our own lives, don't we? We wait to graduate from school, we wait for our flight, we wait in waiting rooms at the doctor's office, we wait for a package to arrive, we wait for many things. And it can be hard to wait! We wait for many things in our lives but perhaps we spend a good portion of our lives waiting for the wrong things. Do we spend our focus and attention waiting for things of little value? Or things for our own lives? Or things we really, really want? One of the only bits of information about Simeon and Anna that God wants us to know is that they were waiting for the right thing. Their whole lives were focused on and waiting for God's salvation to come. Waiting for God's redemption to be revealed.

The miracle of the Christmas account is once again before us. Just think about it. In a land that had God's promises repeated over and over again, that had God's Word, where hundreds of thousands of people lived we're told of only a handful of people who were actually waiting for Jesus to come. The miracle is: Jesus still came! In our day even though our priorities are often mixed up and we are found waiting for many wrong things, the miracle is: Jesus still came. At the heart of the Christmas gospel is the fact that Jesus came. God gives Himself to be born in a manger. Jesus came not just in spite of who we are and what we have done, but because of who we are, sinful people, and what we have done, nothing good to earn Him.

This is the salvation that we need! Jesus came to save us completely on His own, completely separate from anything we could do to earn or deserve it. Jesus came in order to win us salvation completely from A to Z by Himself and hand it to us as our free gift. Jesus came born in exactly the way that we were born into this world; He grew and became strong like us. He came as a true human being just like us to step in our shoes and do for us what we could not do on our own. Since Jesus was also true God we know with certainty that our salvation is true, because God can't mess it up. What a miracle!

There's another miracle in this text. We notice something unusual about this man Simeon. "**It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went**

into the temple courts.” The temple at this time was a busy place. It was kind of the center for both people’s religious and social lives. There would be people coming and going constantly and probably hundreds, if not more. Not everyone at the temple realized just who had come to the temple that day. No doubt many people brushed by and passed by this peasant couple and baby who were there. No reason to give special attention to a normal looking little family. No reason to sing praises to a baby. No doubt most were busy with their own lives going about their normal daily tasks not realizing the miracle that was in their midst. That is everyone except 2 people: Simeon and Anna.

Of all the people there in the temple, in Jerusalem, in Judea, why Simeon? Why Anna? Who are they? What’s so special about them that they should receive such grace? Why should God choose to reveal to these two people who had come to the temple: the promised Savior, Immanuel, God with us, the one who gives light and life, the Redeemer. Who were they to be so honored? Who were they to be so distinguished? Who were they to be given such awesome news? And yet...who am I? Who am I to receive such grace? Who am I that God should reveal the true meaning of Christmas? Who am I that I should know and understand just what Christmas is all about? Who am I to have seen once again my salvation come to earth, my redemption, the Child who makes me God’s child?

I know who I am. I know what I’ve done. No one has to remind me of the many failures I have made in my life. No one has to point to my many sins and problems and shameful acts. I know them all too well. If God should have revealed this awesome truth, revealed His salvation, revealed the true meaning of Christmas to anyone else...that I could understand. But me? The only One who knows my sins more than I do is God Himself and the only One who hates them more than me is God Himself. Yes I could understand God giving such grace to anyone else...but to me?

But the glorious fact is that just as God out of pure grace revealed to Simeon and Anna who this Christ-child was in the temple that day, so has He also revealed His grace to YOU! You know just who that Christ-child is and what He has come to do. You know that God has chosen to work salvation and redemption through Christ and none other. You know that the baby held in Simeon’s arms is salvation, that He came in order to go to a cross to take upon Himself every shameful and evil thing you have ever done. You know that the Christ-child came in order to get out of that tomb and live forever and ever. You know that the Christ-child came in order to rule in your life and rule all things for the good of you and all who believe in Him! What a miracle that God has revealed His grace to you!

And what did Simeon and Anna do? They broke out in song and speech. They gave thanks to God for sending salvation. They proclaimed aloud to all who would listen exactly who this Christ-child is. They like the shepherds spread the Word concerning what had been told them about this Child. And their response is our response too! With such a miracle before us, not only that God would come in such grace, but that He would reveal His grace to me, with such a miracle how can we be silent? How can we not sing about it in songs of praise to the Lord? How can we not tell others who long for redemption and rest for their souls? How can we not share this word of peace?

Finally Simeon knew he could now leave this world in peace. His eyes had seen God’s salvation prepared in the sight for all people. We also have the ultimate peace: the peace of knowing what Christmas is all about, the peace of having a right relationship with God because of Christ, the peace of knowing where we will be when we die because of Christ. Yes, it is a miracle that God should come to save us humans, yes, it’s a miracle that of over 7 billion people in our world that God in grace should reveal the truth to people like me and you. What else is there to do but rejoice and sing about it? Amen.