

THE FIRST 15

Monday, December 23, 2024

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Today is Monday, December 23. This week we study the song of Simeon recorded in the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke following the birth of Jesus.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and holy Lord, in the early morning of a dawning December day, I seek Your presence. As I complete my Advent journey and celebrate the birth of Your Son Jesus Christ, my heart overflows with love and joy. In these busy days, I find a few moments of stillness. I slow my breathing, quiet my mind and prepare my heart to reflect on the message of Simeon, a prophet of old. I listen for the message You have for me today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. Luke 2:22-25

REFLECTION

So much of Luke's Gospel is centered around the Temple in Jerusalem. The angel Gabriel first appeared in the Temple to the father of John the Baptist, Zechariah, in Luke 1:8-20. About a year and a half later we find Mary and Joseph at the Temple. They have brought their six week old baby son for the purification and dedication. Luke wants us to know that Jesus grew up in a family that meticulously observed the Law. The purification of the mother was required forty days after childbirth if it was a son (Leviticus 12:1-8). The mother was to bring a lamb as an offering, but if she could not afford a lamb, allowances were made for women to bring a pair of doves or two pigeons.

The fact that Mary brought the lesser sacrifice indicates that the couple was poor. The parents of the Lamb of God were too poor to afford a sacrificial lamb and offered two birds instead. Jesus grew up in a poor household of a devout Jewish family. We know Jesus had an affinity for the poor, the destitute, and the outcast. We know He had compassion for those who were poor, but perhaps we hadn't truly considered the poverty of His own childhood. He grew up leading a simple life in Nazareth, the son of a carpenter, a poor man's child.

Simeon is a devout old man filled with the Holy Spirit. God assured him that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. Simeon was waiting. He was expectant. He was awaiting the comfort of Israel promised in the Old Testament prophecies. He was familiar with the ancient words of the prophet Isaiah, “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God” (Isaiah 40:1). He

waited for the Messiah to come. He was led to the Temple at the very time Mary and Joseph arrived to present Jesus. His waiting was over when he set his eyes on the baby Jesus.

What are you waiting for this Christmas? What do you hope to see? Simeon longed to see the Messiah of God. Simeon waited and held on to God's promise. How long did he wait? Days, months, years, decades, a lifetime? An old man ready to die, placed faith in God's promises and trusted God to do just what God said he would do.

Simeon wasn't present at the manger with the shepherds. He wasn't there to hear the songs of the angels. He wasn't part of the entourage of the three magi coming from distant foreign kingdoms bringing gifts for the tiny Christ child. But he was there at the Temple that day to hold the baby Jesus in his arms and see the promised Messiah with his own eyes. What are you waiting for this Christmas? Put your faith and trust in God like Simeon did. You will see the promises of God come true.

Ask: What am I waiting for this Christmas? How can I put my hope, faith and trust in God and God alone?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, during these days of the Advent season, You have been preparing my heart, preparing a place for Jesus to enter, preparing a place for Him to be born anew. I wait with expectation for the fulfillment of Your promises and good blessings. Forgive me for my impatience. Forgive me for placing my trust in things of this world. Come, Lord Jesus, fill my heart with Your love, joy, peace and hope this Christmas and always. Amen.