

THE FIRST 15

Tuesday, December 24, 2024

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Today is December 24 and tonight is Christmas Eve. We begin the celebration of Christmas, the birth of God's Son Jesus Christ. We study the song of Simeon recorded in the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke following Jesus' birth.

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

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. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." Luke 2:25-32

REFLECTION

During the season of Advent we have studied the Songs of Christmas recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Following John the Baptist's leap in the womb, Elizabeth's song, Mary's Magnificat, and Zechariah's nine month journey of silence, after a multitude of angels sang Glory to God in the highest, and we followed the shepherds to the manger in Bethlehem, we discover Mary and Joseph with their baby Son at the Temple. It was Jesus' first visit to the Temple of Jerusalem, but certainly not His last.

Simeon was a watchman - watching for the promised Messiah. Simeon was a devout, old man filled with the Holy Spirit. Mentioned three times in these short verses, the Spirit is an active leader in these events. Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit was "on" Simeon. The Holy Spirit told Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah. Then on this particular day and at this particular time the Holy Spirit led Simeon to the Temple courts. We do not know how long Simeon had been waiting for this moment. Perhaps years, or decades or an entire lifetime. Surely there had been numerous young families coming and going from the Temple, bringing their newborn children along to present an offering for the mother's purification. Today was different. This couple was different. Young. Poor. Only two doves to offer, not a lamb. This baby was definitely different.

It is a charming scene to imagine. The aged Simeon, bent over from the frailties of his years, holds out his hands in hope and tenderly cradles the infant Jesus in his arms. The light bulbs go off. His eyes widen and his brows raise. He sees the truth. He recognizes the Messiah of God. His wrinkled hands and frail arms don't hold just any baby, he holds God incarnate, the hope of the ages, the salvation of the world, the redemption of Creation. Right here is the Light of the world and the salvation of all people.

Ask: Have I recognized the Christ Child, the Messiah of God? Do I know the Light of the world is in my midst?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy Lord God, as Simeon waited with expectation, humility and patience, teach me to wait on You, Lord. Give me a heart of faith and the confidence of an unwavering spirit. Help me recognize the movements of the Holy Spirit and obey Your leadings. Help me recognize Jesus in my midst. As I go about the busy comings and goings of preparations for the celebration of Christmas, let me see the Christ Child amid the festivities and take time to praise You for Your good promises. Amen.