

Waiting for Christmas

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again, and a few questions. What are you waiting for this Christmas? Maybe some of us may be waiting for something, maybe something exciting to receive or family to all be together.

Well, in the Gospel of Luke, we come across two characters who make their appearance in the final act of the Christmas drama. One man is named Simeon, and a woman is named Anna.

And they're both waiting for something. They don't appear really in any of the nativity scenes, very few of the Christmas cards. But I believe they have pivotal roles, and they're very important in the story of what happened during that first Christmas.

And both individuals were waiting for something. Well, actually, they were waiting for someone. And Luke uses a couple of Greek words when he writes about these two individuals, and it's the word of anticipation, something for which they were waiting.

They were expecting the coming of their Messiah, the coming of the Savior. And it literally means they were alert to his appearance, and they were ready to welcome him.

[1 : 22] We're going to be in Luke chapter 2 this morning, verses 25 and following. We're going to go a few places there in Luke. There will be some in Matthew this morning.

And in reference to Simeon in Luke 2.25, where we read he was waiting, and also in Luke 2.38, describing the woman named Anna that she was looking forward to.

So the first character we're going to look at this morning is Simeon. And what he was waiting for was comfort. Simeon was looking forward to and waiting for comfort.

We're introduced to him in Luke chapter 2 and verse number 25. If we look together at that this morning. Things were not really going well for Jerusalem during this period of time.

It had been many, many, many years since Israel had heard from God. They were under Roman rule, Roman oppression. They had lost their political independence.

[2 : 43] And they were living under the despotic rule of King Herod. And many were waiting for their Messiah, but wondering if the Messiah would ever come.

Because they had not heard from God for so long, they had lost their hope. And verse 26 shows us that Simeon had good reason for hope.

He had good reason for anticipation. As we read that together, Luke 2.26, And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Or that Greek word, the Lord's anointed one. So Simeon was looking forward with anticipation and hope. Because the Holy Spirit had revealed to him, You're not going to die before you get to see the Savior.

The Messiah will come in your lifetime. And Simeon's hope was focused on the comfort that the Messiah would bring. There are other places in Scripture that refers to the Messiah as the consolation.

[3 : 54] Or the one who would bring comfort. Popular title for the Messiah was that of comforter.

And just like some of the Christmas songs that we sang just a little bit earlier, They were looking for the Messiah to come.

They were looking for the hope of Israel. They were looking for his comfort that would be brought to them. And it strikes me that comfort is one of the basic universal needs of mankind.

Because we hurt. We have things that we go through that bring turmoil into our lives. Bring pain. And so we're looking for comfort.

For many, there's desperation during the holidays. And Jesus Christ is able to bring that hope. As a matter of fact, the holidays are a major crisis times for many who suffer from depression.

Some who even think about ending the pain of their lives, The loneliness and things that they are going through. So the holidays are a difficult time for many people.

[5 : 01] So the Holy Spirit prompts Simeon to go to the temple courts at just the right time, On just the right day, When Mary and Joseph would be bringing the child Jesus to the temple.

And so here we have this story. Jesus probably being about six weeks old. About this time, he knew that God's promises would be kept. And so Simeon ends up there in the temple.

And here we have Emmanuel, God with us, in the form of this baby, Jesus Christ. And he was going to make everything right. He was going to be the consolation of Israel.

And there was significance in his presence. And he was going to eliminate fear, rejection, and loneliness. And in Luke chapter, and in verse 28 of Luke chapter 2, We see that Simeon reached down, takes the baby Jesus, and he says something.

Here we have in verse 27 and 28, verse 27 says, So he came by the Holy Spirit to the temple. The Holy Spirit prompts Simeon to come at just the right time.

[6 : 12] And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him, according to the custom of the law, Simeon goes up to Mary, his mother, and he just simply takes the baby.

Now imagine with me, parents, if some old guy would come up to you and grab your baby and takes him up in his arms. And it says he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said.

So here is Simeon. We're going to see this in a little bit, what he says. But he grabs him up. And as he is saying and as he's speaking out in excitement and joy, not only fulfilling the individual promise to Simeon, but this baby will fulfill the promise that God had made to Israel and ultimately to everyone thereafter to comfort both Jew and to comfort Gentiles.

And so we have Simeon who is here and he blesses God when he sees. So he takes him up in his arms. I don't have this up on the screen.

And he says, Very, very excited.

[7 : 40] He was waiting for that. He was waiting to see the Messiah in his lifetime, the comforter of Israel. We have Simeon.

And then we have Anna is the next character that we are introduced to in the Gospel of Luke. Anna was waiting for forgiveness. Anna was waiting for forgiveness.

She was waiting with anticipation. After her husband had died, she dedicates herself to God and she is daily in the temple. As a matter of fact, day and night, she dedicated herself to fasting and to praying.

As a matter of fact, she could fill all the slots. Like when we have 24 hours of prayer and we're signing up for slots, Anna could have filled all the slots because she was there 24 hours a day praying and fasting.

So she was looking forward to the same person as Simeon. She was looking for the Messiah. She was looking for the one who would be the Redeemer of Israel, the one who would redeem Israel from their sin.

[8 : 46] She was looking for forgiveness. Let's take a look at verse 38, starting with verse number 36. Verse 36 says, Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher.

She was of a great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity. And this woman was a widow of about 84 years who did not depart from the temple.

She never left, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant, she gave thanks to the Lord.

Again, another divine appointment. Gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of him to all those who looked for the redemption of Israel.

The word redemption is related to that idea of captivity. The Old Testament Passover speaks to that as well. When Israel was in captivity and when they were let out of Egypt.

[9 : 50] And when God told them to be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. He was talking about, it was a picture of the redemption that God provided.

And this is what we see that Anna, or to which Anna was looking forward to. That God would release the captives. Ultimately, Passover also pointed ahead to the day that God would provide deliverance from the slavery of sin.

That is what we are looking forward to. And that is what Simeon was looking forward to. That is what Anna was looking forward to. Simeon looking forward to the comfort, the consolation that the

Messiah would bring.

Of course, they were expecting the Messiah to deliver them from the oppression of Rome. But Jesus Christ came and delivered mankind. Provided the comfort.

Anna is looking forward to the redemption. And Jesus Christ saving us from our sin. Redeeming us from Satan.

[10:55] And providing all that we need. One of the things we realize during this Christmas season as we are preparing next week to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We understand this morning that Jesus is the only one that can provide everything we need. Whether it's consolation or comfort.

Whether it's forgiveness or redemption. Jesus Christ provides all of that. Jesus Christ provides what you and provides what I need.

When Jesus came, he provided the very thing for which Simeon was waiting. When Jesus came onto the scene, he provided the very thing for which Anna was waiting. Comfort and forgiveness.

Let me ask you a question. For what are you waiting this Christmas? Whatever it is, Jesus can give it to you. Whether it's forgiveness, comfort, family.

[11:57] Just simply rest time together. Jesus Christ can provide it. Maybe you identify with Simeon this morning. Maybe you're hurting. Maybe there's something going on in your life and you're needing comfort.

Jesus Christ can provide that. Maybe you identify with Anna. Maybe there are things that you're going through played with guilt this Christmas because of maybe something from your past. Whatever it is, Jesus Christ can provide that forgiveness, provide that redemption. Jesus Christ can provide that to you. And I can think of no better time than the Christmas season for God to provide our consolation, God to provide forgiveness.

Many of you here, most of you here probably know Jesus as your Savior already. But remember, the gospel is more than just the salvation of our souls.

We've been talking about the last few weeks that salvation is an event. It took place the moment we trusted Christ as our Savior. But salvation is also a process.

[13:11] We are in the process of being sanctified day by day, more and more being brought into the image of Jesus Christ. And also, salvation is a goal.

Because the ultimate goal of our salvation is our glorification, where we will be spending time forever. We will come face to face with our Heavenly Father. We will see our Savior face to face one day when we're glorified.

So, what's next? We see Simeon waiting for comfort. We see Anna waiting for deliverance or redemption, forgiveness.

So, we're going to have some action steps this morning. A couple of action steps as we wind down today's message. What do we do? What can we learn from Anna?

What can we learn from Simeon this morning? Well, first, I believe we can become a marveler. I don't know that that's a word.

[14:10] But we can become a marveler. Number one, become a marveler. When Joseph, when Mary tried to process everything that they had heard, everything that they had experienced, verse 33 says they marveled at what the angel said.

How can that be? This is so wonderful, they couldn't believe it. And do we become so anesthetized to all of the holiday busyness that we cease to marvel at the miracle that took place on that morning, on that evening, a couple of thousand years ago, when Jesus became a human being, disrobed from the majesty that was his, and took upon himself the form of flesh and became a human being.

Now, according to the dictionary, marvel, or to marvel means to be filled with wonder, astonishment, and surprise. Just like the surprise and wonder that children have on Christmas morning when they're wondering to see what they have, and when they get those awesome gifts, we can have that same, or I believe we ought to have, and could have that same marvel and wonder and astonishment in what we're waiting for in the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Being filled with wonder, being a marveler this Christmas. But sometimes we get caught up in all the busyness of the holiday season, and we cease to see it as the name implies, a holy day.

You know, when people say, you know, happy holidays, they think, you know what they think they're doing? They think they're taking Jesus out of the season. But really what they're saying is,

happy holy day.

[16:05] What makes the day holy? What makes the season holy? Jesus Christ. And so he is the reason why we celebrate the birth.

This is why we celebrate Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ. And have we heard about Christmas so much that it ceases to astonish us? I think we can become more childlike and be filled with that wonder, filled with that awe.

And maybe one of the ways that we can do that, maybe this holiday season, this Christmas season, pick one of the characters that surround the manger.

Maybe even pick one of our two characters we talked about this morning and put yourself in their sandals. And think back 2,000 years ago. What if you were one of the shepherds out in the field watching your flocks by night, and the star, the angel appears.

And unlike a very uncharacteristic of the shepherds, they hurried and said, let's get out of here. Let's go to Bethlehem. Or maybe the wise men.

[17:16] Put yourself in their sandals. What it would have been like to have the directive from Herod to go find this baby, knowing what Herod was going to do, but instead listening to God and going and bringing gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And by the way, each stood, each symbolized something that was very kingly or something that was going to symbolize the death of Jesus Christ or symbolize the majesty of Jesus Christ.

Or maybe even put yourself in Mary's place. The awe and the wonder of not having ever been with a man and saying, you know what, you're going to be with child and this child is going to be the savior of the world.

Or Joseph. Or Simeon. Hearing that you're going to see the Messiah before you die. And Anna waiting for the redemption of Israel.

And God having them, by divine appointment, just in the right place, at the right time. You know, sometimes we think to ourselves, oh, that was just kind of happenstance.

[18:26] Or, well, that was a coincidence. Well, with God, there are no coincidences. They came there at just the right time. So become a marveler. This Christmas season.

We're out and about in the business. And the mall. Oh, who would want to go to the mall? But you know what? It's that part of the season, right? But maybe you're out there shopping and you're dealing with all the crowds.

I don't like crowds. I don't like being around a lot of people because it's just, it's too chaotic. But when you're in all of this busyness, stop for a moment, or at least pause for a moment, and marvel. And why is this season special? So we can become a marveler. Second, how about we become a mover? How about we become a mover?

You say, well, Pastor, what do you mean by that? Let's look at Luke 2, 27. So he came by the Spirit to the temple. We're talking about Simeon. So he came by the Spirit to the temple.

[19:30] And when the parents brought in the child, Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law. We also see in verse 38.

So what did Simeon do? The Bible says the Spirit moved him. He came. Verse 38. Now we have Anna. And coming in that instant, she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke to him, spoke of him to all who looked for redemption in Israel.

Simeon heard. He went. Anna saw. She said. She moved. She spoke. Both Simeon and Anna were movers.

When the Holy Spirit prompted them to do something, they did it. They moved. They didn't stand still. And I wonder what would have happened had they not responded, had they not reacted, had they not moved.

But as we read, as you go through Matthew, as you go through the account in Luke, what we see is every single one of the Christmas characters moved.

[20:37] They did something when they were prompted by God, prompted by the Holy Spirit. Not only Simeon, not only Anna. The shepherds did. The wise men did.

Mary did. Joseph did. All of them said, okay. And they did it. We see verse 38. The angel comes to Mary and says, you're going to be with child.

This child will be special. Then Mary said, behold, the maidservant of the Lord. How did she respond? Let it be. Let it be. According to be to me, according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. What about Joseph? Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep. What did he do? He did.

He did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife. So we have Simeon moved. Anna moved. Mary moved.

[21 : 37] She did exactly what the angel said. She said, may it be to me. Joseph did what the angel said. And as we learned last Sunday, the shepherds were movers.

Wise men were movers. They moved the moment the Holy Spirit spoke to them. Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened.

Luke chapter 2, verse 15. When God prompts us to do something, what are we going to do? We have a decision. We have a choice that we make. Every time we're prompted by God's Holy Spirit to do something, to move, to give, to serve, to help, whatever it is.

We have a choice. When we sense that prompting of the Holy Spirit, are we going to be a mover like Anna and like Simeon?

It might mean salvation for some. It might mean full surrender for others. Maybe there's still a portion of you that God doesn't have yet, that you have not yet fully surrendered.

[22 : 54] Maybe it's your tithes. Maybe it's service. Maybe it's your children. Maybe it's whatever it is. Maybe it's your job. Have you fully surrendered to Him?

Do you sense Him moving in your life? Are we willing to move? Are we a mover? Don't procrastinate when God moves you. Just like the Nike slogan.

Just do it. Let's not miss out on the miracles this Christmas season. It might just be simply a simple act of service that God can use to perform a miracle this Christmas.

So for what are you waiting? Jesus provides it all. Let's pray. Lord, use this time today, we pray.

We thank you that you have shown us through the example of Simeon and Anna who are waiting for something special, waiting for someone special, the Messiah, the Christ, their Savior.

[24 : 11] Father, this morning I pray that we would be marvelers this Christmas, marvelers throughout the year. But not only that, that we could be movers.

Thank you for what you're going to do in our lives. Thank you, Father, for what you're going to do in our midst. Bless us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.