

The Waiting is Over

Luke 2:25-32

If I were to ask you to score yourself as to how patient you are, what score would you give yourself? Let's say Zero is not at all patient: you want it done and you want it done now, and if it's not done now you start getting frustrated; and 10 is: 'hey, we've got all the time in the world, let's just chill.' Where would you put yourself? How patient are you? Or, worse still, where would your wife, or husband, or children or friends put you?

Well, if you were to ask my girls, 'how does your dad score?', if they were being really generous, and if I was having an especially good day, and if I paid them, they might just give me a 'half', because I struggle with patience. Now, having 4 daughters who take forever in the bathroom and who leave long blond hairs everywhere would be a test of any man's patience. But even I have to admit, this is not an area I excel in.

And kids, maybe you're the same. Maybe you don't like waiting. You want the holidays to come *now*, and you want Christmas to be here *now*, and when Christmas comes you want to open your presents *now*.

Well, what if you had to wait your entire life for Christmas? What if, instead of waiting just two more weeks for Christmas to come, you had to wait eighty more years? But that is what Simeon had to do. Simeon, the character in our last Bible reading, had been waiting for the birth and the coming of the Messiah all his life. And by now he was now an old man.

But Simeon wasn't the only one waiting. This waiting had been going on for hundreds, even thousands of years: the promise that God would send His Messiah. And by choosing Abraham and then Israel and then David, God had been slowly but surely working out His plan, and building the expectation. And the Prophets: Isaiah and Micah and Jeremiah kept that hope alive. Like putting the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle together they got to work on different bits of the picture, and each time they saw just a little bit more of who this Messiah would be. But still they had to wait. And God's people would live with this longing hope: will the Messiah come in my lifetime? Will I live to see Christmas?

And this old man Simeon was the last watchman, standing on his look-out tower, looking for the signal, for the sign, for the coming of the Messiah. And when Mary and Joseph bring Jesus into the temple, and he takes this baby up in his arms, he sees it. The wait is over. It's come.

But what has come?

Well, listen to what Simeon says (Luke 2:30) 'My eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples'. When Simeon takes Jesus in his arms, he is seeing and holding God's salvation. Everything that God has been working out, from the first failure of our first parents, through the lives of Abraham and Israel and David and the prophets, this plan to rescue us from a world gone astray and from ourselves, this salvation has come.

And Simeon knew this wasn't just for him, or even just for the Jewish people. God has done this for all people. So whichever nation or people group you are from, you're included in this.

And as a result of seeing this day, Simeon knew he could die happy: 'Lord' he says in v29, 'now you are letting your servant depart in peace.' The longing of Simeon's heart had been answered by the coming of Christ. He had waited so long for this and he got to see it and now he knew peace. The watchman could leave his post.

Now, you and I may try and fill the restless void that's in our hearts through relationships, family, career, or success, and we look to those to answer the longing of our hearts and the meaning of life. But the lesson of Simeon is that it's through the coming of Christ that we find real peace.

But how can you get there? How can you know what Simeon knew, this sense of inner peace, of coming home? Well first step, like Simeon, is to acknowledge who's in charge. Simeon addresses God as his gracious sovereign - 'Lord'. God was his Lord and Simeon was His servant. All the time we think we're the Lord, we'll never know peace, because we'll always see things as threats to our rule. So first step is to humble yourself and say 'you're the Lord and I am happy to be your servant.'

Second step is to embrace Christ as your salvation, as Simeon did. Now Simeon got to hold a baby, which is always nice. Before I became a pastor I was a paediatrician, a neonatologist. Which meant I got paid to hold babies! But Jesus isn't a baby anymore. He is the King reigning on high. So for us, embracing and taking hold of Jesus is to trust him: Jesus, you are my salvation: all that you are and all that you came to do, your life and death and resurrection, I take hold of by faith. You see, Christ has come and, like Simeon, you can now depart in peace.

But just imagine a family on Christmas Day. And the various family members are opening their presents and eating the turkey and playing the games, but one child is refusing to take part. And every time he's invited to come and get involved he puts his hands over his ears to block out the noise and says, 'no, I'm waiting for Christmas, I'm waiting for the real thing'. And his dad is stood there, 'Come on son, come and eat, come and play, we've got this wonderful present for you.' But the boy just covers his ears : 'no, I'm waiting for Christmas'. Now, what would you say to him? 'Hello! This *is* Christmas! It's here, it's come!' Tragically, that is just what happened with Jesus. At the end, Simeon warns Mary that not everyone will be glad Jesus has come. Some people will close their eyes and ears to what God is doing through Him. This Christmas, don't do the same. In your search for peace and fulfillment and forgiveness and for life, don't miss the very thing that can give it. What you have been waiting for has come. Take hold of Him by faith.