

The First Sunday after Christmas [B] (Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)

Sermon is from the Gospel lesson: Luke 2, especially vv 25-35

"In Jerusalem lived a man named Simeon who was a good man and godly. He was waiting for the time when God would take away Israel's sorrow, and the Holy Spirit was in him. Simeon had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he saw the Christ promised by the Lord."

Who was SIMEON? [Invent a name sign] Was Simeon an old man? The Bible does not tell his age. But we can assume that Simeon was a Senior Citizen.

What the Bible really tells us about Simeon is more important than his age: Really, it was his CHARACTER.

- (1) Simeon was a good man.
- (2) He worshipped God.
- (3) The Holy Spirit was in Simeon.
- (4) Simeon expected to see God's Savior before he (Simeon) died.

Simeon was not famous. He was not powerful. You will not find any books written about his life. The TV History Channel or Biography won't have any program about him. But people without honor here on earth, God often chooses them for the greatest honor in heaven. That is true for Simeon.

The Bible says: "The Holy Spirit led Simeon to the Temple."

How did the Spirit of God lead Simeon to the temple that day? What did Simeon think while he was going to the temple? Did Simeon understand that the Holy Spirit was leading him there? Or did Simeon think that going to the temple that day was his own idea? Or God lead Simeon to the temple through normal things that happened?

Stop and think for a minute. How does God lead US to do the things He wants? True, God teaches us what is right and wrong through His Word, the Bible.

Example: The Ten Commandments. God makes our conscience awake with what we learn from His Word. When God wants us to do something special, He brings

some need to our attention. Then His Holy Spirit makes our conscience remember what He already said in His Word that we should do.

Often, if we only do what Christians are should do through every day life, we often see and understand LATER that God led us to be at the right place, at the right time, so God could use us to help someone.

What about Simeon? What was his own reason for going to the temple?

Answer: We don't really how Simeon knew he must go to the temple that day. But we can guess that Simeon often came to the temple, same as his friend Anna. Simeon had a very close [*near*] fellowship with God. Simeon had the kind of relationship [*connect*] with God that God wants with every one of us. Simeon was most interested in the things that were most important to God.

In some way, Simeon knew that he will live to see the Savior God promised many years ago in the Old Testament.

"When Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple..." the Holy Spirit made Simeon's eyes open and he recognized the Savior.

All this seems very strange... and weird. But really, it's not strange. What Simeon experienced there in the temple is exactly the same that God does today for every man, woman, and child, who recognizes Jesus as WHO HE IS. If you, as an adult, began to trust Jesus for your Savior, you understand exactly as Simeon experienced.

(question) HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT JESUS IS CHRIST?

(answer) BECAUSE JESUS HIMSELF SHOWED YOU.

Jesus Himself showed you He is Christ, your Lord, your Savior. And as Simeon did, you embrace [*hug*] Jesus, and say,

“Now, Lord, you can let me, Your servant,
die in peace as You said.

With my own eyes I have seen Your salvation,
which You prepared before all people..."

Yes, this is the song we say often after we receive our Lord's Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. We "borrowed" that song from Simeon.

Now the story continues:

"Mary and Joseph were surprised about the things Simeon said about Jesus. Then Simeon blessed them. He said to Mary, 'God has chosen this baby to cause many people in Israel to fall or rise. HE will be a sign [*show*] from God that many people will talk against, openly showing their thoughts.' "

For everyone who does-not yet recognize Jesus as Simeon recognized Him, Simeon has something to tell you. Simeon says to you: Christ is your Savior. When Simeon said that Jesus was for "all people," that includes you and me. Jesus does not choose people for their ETHNIC background. Jesus does not choose people for their language and culture. Jesus does not choose people only if they are very good and religious. Jesus does not choose people only if they are very bad and dirty.

Jesus is your Savior. When Jesus later died on the cross, He died for you. He paid your debt to God.

If Christ did not come, we all would still be slaves to sin, lost, without hope. But Christ came, lived, died, and rose to live again. He offers us
 freedom from guilt,
 freedom from slavery to bad thoughts and habits,
 freedom from eternal death.

Simeon's words give us comfort and encouragement. But Simeon's words also challenge us:

"God has chosen this baby to cause many people... to fall or rise. HE will be a sign [*show*] from God that many people will talk against, openly showing their thoughts."

We may fall - Jesus comes to lift us up.

Or we may try to stand, rejecting Jesus; but we will lose.

The Bible says that one day all people will recognize Jesus - some people recognize Him as Savior and Friend. Many people who reject Him will admit in shame that Jesus is God and King.

Let us pray:

Holy Spirit, open our eyes. Help us recognize Jesus - not only as the Christmas baby. Help us recognize Jesus as our Savior, our King. We have fallen into sin. Please raise us up to live with You forever. Amen.