

“Songs of Christmas – NUNC DEMITTIS”

Luke 2:21-35

What would make your life complete? Is there something that you believe that you were placed on the earth to do or to see that you haven't accomplished or witnessed yet? There is a movie titled "The Bucket List." Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman portray two men dying of cancer who make a list of things that they want to do before they "kick the bucket."

I knew a godly woman who had a fast -growing cancer. She was in terrible pain. Before she died, she wanted to sew her daughter's wedding dress and see her walk down the aisle. She made the wedding dress, attended her daughter's wedding, and died very soon thereafter.

There was an old man, Simeon, in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout. What would make his life complete, allow him to let go of this mortal clay, and die in peace would be to see the Consolation of Israel, the Messiah of God. The Holy Spirit revealed that he would not see death until his eyes beheld the Lord's Christ. One day the Spirit led him to the Temple where he met Joseph, Mary, and the Baby Jesus.

Jesus had already been circumcised and named eight days after He was born. Forty days after a boy was born and eighty days after a girl was born, the mother and baby were taken by the husband to the Temple where the mother was ritually cleansed and the baby was dedicated to the Lord by a sacrifice. Instead of an animal, Joseph brought the poor man's sacrifice, two birds either turtledoves or pigeons. Simeon met them, took the Baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God, saying-

1.) "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; (Luke 2:29 NKJV)

Simeon lived before Jesus died on the cross and made peace with God for us. Simeon didn't know how God would accomplish his redemption but he trusted in Him for salvation. He believed the Gospel never having heard it proclaimed.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. (Hebrews 11:1-2 NKJV)

We now live after Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the dead and the Good News we believe has a substance that Simeon's did not have. By God's grace both Simeon and we are saved by faith.

People who do not have faith in God do not have hope or peace. When Abner, the great warrior, died, King David asked, "Should Abner die as a fool dies?" Of the two criminals crucified alongside Jesus, while one was asking for mercy, the other was mocking Jesus. History is filled with stories of Christians who died with a prayer on their lips and of unbelievers who died screaming and cursing.

Simeon acknowledged that God had kept His promise to him. In keeping His promise in a little thing like seeing the Lord's promised Messiah, Simeon was assured that God would keep His promise of something much greater – Simeon's salvation.

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Numbers 23:19 NKJV)

Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, (Titus 1:1-2 NKJV)

Simeon could now die in peace. His hope of seeing the Consolation of Israel was fulfilled. It was fulfilled in such a manner that it was a fulfillment of a promise by God. Since he experienced God keeping His promise in this matter, he was assured of God's promise of salvation.

2.) For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, (Luke 2:30-31 NKJV)

What had Simeon seen with his eyes? With his physical eyes he could not see a baby boy almost six weeks old. To see any more than that required Divine help. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Jesus told him, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father which is in heaven." The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Simeon came by the Spirit into the Temple just as Joseph, and Mary with the Baby Jesus were also entering it. So it was also by the Spirit of God that he saw this baby, God's way salvation for mankind.

Simeon said "all people". He knew God had prepared salvation for all peoples. Most Jews at that time felt that God belonged to them. There were a handful of Gentiles who attended synagogues and kept the Law. The Jews believed the covenant promises by God were only for the children of Abraham. However, even in the Old Testament God said plainly He desires and had prepared salvation for all peoples.

And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:6-9 NKJV)

When we see something new we don't always realize it will be in our future. When my grandfather was courting my grandmother he had to rent a horse on Sundays to see her. In 1908 he saw an automobile for the first time. Twenty-one years later, he bought his first car.

3.) A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."
(Luke 2:32 NKJV)

Simeon makes a distinction between what the coming of Christ means to the Gentiles and what His coming means for the Jews.

For the Gentiles, He brought the light of the knowledge of God,
The Gentiles worshiped the gods of men's imagination.

because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

(Romans 1:21-25 NKJV)

It was of the Gentiles that Isaiah wrote-

The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2 NKJV)

For the Gentiles, lost in darkness, Jesus was the lighted path, the true and living Way to God.

The Jews had received revelation from God through a number of prophets. This revelation had been progressive, like a lamp being turned up brighter with each succeeding prophecy, until with the coming of of Jesus Christ it beamed gloriously. He is the Bright and Morningstar.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NKJV)

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. (Matthew 17:1-2 NKJV)

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:10-11 NKJV)