

When kids are going to do something they know they shouldn't be doing and don't want to get caught doing it, a lookout is assigned. The lookout's usually the one all the other kids think will mess up whatever mischief they're trying to get into. Even though it kinda stinks to be lookout, it's a really important job. If the lookout gets distracted and stops looking out, everyone gets caught, even the lookout! The job of being lookout, of keeping watch, is historically an important one. A watchman on patrol kept eyes open for danger and sounded the alarm if any was seen. A watchman was the first to see reinforcements coming and spread the good news boosting morale.

Simeon was such a watchman. He was waiting and watching for the promised Savior busily doing what all Jews were to be doing since the promise was made: believing God's words, obeying them in love for him. Simeon had been waiting patiently his whole life for, as Luke calls him, the consolation of Israel. What a great title for Jesus that is, consolation. When do we need consolation? When we've been through the ringer of having sin pointed, endure the subsequent discipline, are forgiven, are restored, but now are having a hard time accepting that you are forgiven. We need someone to assure us, to comfort us until it sinks in that we're forgiven, that we really are okay. Jesus is consolation. Jesus brought comfort, forgiveness, freedom, and peace because he is these things! No wonder world weary Simeon longed so eagerly for the rest Jesus gives.

God made Simeon a promise, *"It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah."* (**Luke 2:26**) In his lifetime, the one who'd save people from their sins in fulfillment of promise, would come. Incredible! To know that the one chosen by God from eternity to be the sacrifice to end all sacrifices would come and that you would actually see him! And, by the Holy Spirit's guidance, that's what happened, *"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,"*²⁸ *Simeon took him in his arms and praised God."* (**Luke 2:27, 28**) Of course he did! Simeon knew the significance of this little baby, he knew who and what he was holding. In his arms he held the world's salvation – his salvation – the eternal and almighty God. What would you do if you could look down into the face of God? I'd burst into tears. No question. Saying, "I'm sorry," over and over again knowing how unworthy of love from God I am only to hear him say, "I love you. It's ok. You're ok. We're ok," over and over again. How would you react?

Simeon sang. Right in the Temple court, as one does when holding a baby, he sang, *“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.”* **(Luke 2:29-32)** Listen to how thankful, joyful, and content Simeon is. His spirit is satisfied as only Jesus can satisfy it. Now that God has kept his promise, now that his duty as one of Israel’s last Old Testament watchmen is complete, he can spread the good news and, according to God’s own word, is dismissed into eternal life on that note, in the most serene peace. He, the Lord’s servant, has not only seen, but cradled in his own arms, the Consolation of Israel. Simeon is relieved. Simeon is released. The Light of Life had come into the world. That light, which is Jesus, would shine the light of truth to drive away darkness and bring salvation. Simeon says all this while holding Jesus in his arms, looking into the eyes of God, not waiting any longer. The Lord’s Messiah had come.

Meanwhile, Mary and Joseph are just standing there looking shocked at how this man knew who their baby was without them telling him! They were just doing what God said was to be done for newborn eldest kids and had no idea that Simeon was led by the Spirit at the precise time to the exact place to say all these things about their baby. Rather alarming for a strange man to scoop up your child and proclaim the truth of who he was, that he was the Messiah? I’d be caught off guard too. Simeon then spoke to them, Mary specifically, *“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”* **(Luke 2:34-35)** Imagine hearing that as a new mom! Divisive? Soul piercing? Jesus would certainly be divisive. He is divisive. Who falls because of Jesus? Those who are confident of their own righteousness. People hated Jesus, still do, because he didn’t sweep sin under the rug. He called people out and held them to the requirements of the law.

Some are immediately offended because of the gospel is the sharpest of all two-edged swords which reveals the thoughts of the mind and intentions of the heart. Jesus showed that during his ministry. He told the woman at the well everything she ever did, but only after he offered her salvation from the living water, the water of life. He revealed the hopes of the rich young man to be false by showing that he could not earn or buy his way into heaven. Even the thoughts of our hearts are revealed by Jesus. How many times when you’re reading the Word, aren’t you forced stop to think about the life you’re living and repent? God’s Word causes us to do some serious thinking, doesn’t it? “Am I living as the person God wants me to be? Holy, good, loving? Living God’s Word” God’s law, which Jesus upholds – completes even – shows clearly that we fail at this routinely. We sometimes take offense at Jesus, too, because the

Law he upholds does condemn us but also because he just forgives! He even forgives *those* people! That isn't fair! Right! Just like it isn't fair for us to be forgiven.

Jesus does this, he forgives, because he is the Word of God, is the gospel of God. He is the good news because he is salvation and he is, therefore, also the most soothing and comforting balm there is for those who are crushed by sin and tormented by temptation. Simeon's words proclaimed that. His words to Mary are the first time she heard that Jesus would suffer, not that she forgot what the Old Testament said about how he'd save people from sin; it's just hard to apply that to your baby boy. Before, she'd only heard glorious things about him, but these words of Israel's old watchman, Simeon, are preparing her for the mission her son and God came to the world to accomplish. Jesus came to die and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mary would be an eye witness to that. Mary would, one day, watch her baby boy drag his cross up a hill, be nailed to it, and die on it. Absolutely soul piercing indeed.

Simeon's prophecy is a reminder to us all that Jesus came to this earth to die, which is somber, especially because we just celebrated his birth. But Jesus' death is the deepest display of God's love for sinners. As we end another year and begin another, what better thing could there be to know? Resolve to know nothing but Christ and him crucified because that love is your salvation and your guidance for life. Do you want to make some changes this year? Love any and every one like Christ, through his peace and the power of his Spirit from his Word, and watch the blessings which flow from him living in you!

Knowing Jesus is contentment. We see Jesus now through faith. In time, we will see our Savior Jesus face to face and experience the truest, deepest, and most lasting satisfaction of spirit. We are free now because God's promises have been fulfilled. When we are dismissed from this life in peace, we'll step into eternal life and see Jesus with resurrected and glorified eyes, we'll all say, "My eyes have seen your salvation!" Amen.