

The Comfort of Christ (Luke 2:22-38)

(22) And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (23) (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") (24) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." (25) Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (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. (27) And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, (28) he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, (29) "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; (30) for my eyes have seen your salvation (31) that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, (32) a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." (33) And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. (34) And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (35) (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (36) And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, (37) and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. (38) And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

(1) Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. (2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins... (5) And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (Isa 40:1-2, 5)

(13) Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. (Isa 49:13)

(3) For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. (Isa 51:3)

(1) The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; (2) to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; (Isa 61:1-2)

1. Mary and Joseph loved God, His law, and His Son. They wanted to do everything according to God's Word and His way, and this did not make them legalistic. You can love God's law without being legalistic. They presented Jesus to God, as was every firstborn male. Do you demonstrate your love for God in practical ways like Mary and Joseph? Do you love God's law even as you rest in the gospel? Do you want to live a pure and holy life even as you rest in the pure and holy One, Jesus? If you have children, have you presented them to the Lord in a public way?
2. Do you seek to love and obey God according to the ways He has laid out in His Word? Because of the sacrifice of Christ we have peace with God and freedom to live a life fully devoted to Him. We can now offer our lives (body and soul) as living sacrifices before God. We see even more clearly here that despite Mary and Joseph's poverty, they still gave to God out of what they had. He was their treasure and they loved Him with all their hearts. Is God your treasure, and do you love Him with all your heart?
3. Simeon was a godly old man who loved Jesus to death. He was righteous and devout. He was righteous because of His faith in Christ. Now as a justified child of God, Simeon wanted to do what was right in God's sight each day. He wanted to please God, even as he rested in the coming One who alone would fully please God perfectly (Jesus). Simeon was devoted to God with his whole heart. He was a man characterized by his devotion to the Lord. Have you been justified before God through faith in Christ? Are you seeking to grow in practical righteousness each day? Are you growing in your devotion/commitment to Jesus as you get older? Are you characterized as a devotional person? Have you considered reading through the entire Bible with us this year in just 15 minutes a day using a plan like the 1 Year Bible?
4. Simeon was waiting for consolation, comfort, rescue, hope. We need to be consoled in this life, comforted in this life, rescue from this life, and we need hope. Have you found consolation in Christ? Have you found comfort in Christ? Is Jesus your real "comfort food?" All of the characters in this great story have needed comfort. You and I need comfort. We all look to someone or something for comfort (people, food, drugs/substances, alcohol, work, music, etc.). Whatever you look to for ultimate comfort is your functional "god." Christ alone can satisfy our need for true comfort.
5. Simeon was a man who the Holy Spirit rested on. He loved God's Word, loved God's Son, and he listened to God's Spirit. He was filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit, and found the comfort of the Holy Spirit (The Comforter). Is the Holy Spirit upon you today? Are you sensitive to and listening for the Holy Spirit to speak to you in personal ways? God speaks through His Word and by His Spirit, and they will never contradict each other, and it will always be for Christ's glory because the Spirit always points to Jesus. Evidence of the Holy Spirit's work is a love for Jesus, devotion to God, growth in righteousness, peace, comforting of others, love for God's Word, love for God's law, etc.
6. God is in control of death. No one or nothing can take your life until it is your time. You don't have to worry about death. Jesus has overcome death, and God is sovereign over death. Don't forget that God is sovereign, not Herod, Caesar, Quirinius, Obama, Trump, Hillary, Bentley, or any other leader, person, angel, animal, or even nature.
7. Simeon was a man of worship, praise, thanksgiving, service, love, and the Word. Do you worship Jesus? Simeon bowed before his Creator as Sovereign Lord, Master, Ruler, and King of his life. Do you live this way?
8. Simeon recognized that salvation was not a path or program, but a Person, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way of salvation. Salvation is found in Him and Him alone. Salvation is a result of Jesus' work, Jesus' love, Jesus' power. Are you looking to Jesus for salvation? If not, turn from your sin today and put your trust in Him alone. Knowing Jesus brings peace. Jesus came to die for the sins of the world. Salvation is available to all who want it today.

9. Simeon was a man who loved people and sought to pray for and bless others in Christ's name. Do you love people and want Christ's blessing for them?
10. Jesus raises up those who trust Him, but those who reject Him will fall. Jesus will be loved by some and hated by others. Jesus will bring both unity and division. Those who love the truth and the light will love Him, but those who love lies and darkness will hate Him.
11. Mary would know the pain of seeing her Son rejected for who He was. She would watch Him die. The pain of loosing of child is deep, especially if you watch it happen up close and personally. The pain for Mary would be so great that it could be called "a sword piercing her soul." Have you ever had soul piercing pain? Only Jesus can heal this kind of pain, and all pain.
12. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection would uncover what was really in people's hearts. People can trick you and hide things from you in their hearts, but they can't hide from God, I can't hide from God, you can't hide from God. Are you trying to hide today? Come out, be forgiven, be healed, be comforted, find peace.
13. Mary and Joseph thought deeply about what everyone, especially Simeon, was saying about Jesus. They were trying to take it all in.
14. Anna was a prophetess who loved Jesus to death. She loved God's Word, spoke God's Word, taught God's Word, and was also sensitive to God's Spirit. Anna, like Simeon was led by the Spirit, sensitive to the Spirit's voice, controlled by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit was upon her. As a young girl she walked in purity as a virgin. She was married for 7 years before her husband died, and then she lived as a widow. She too had experienced the pain of loss, grief, and sorrow. If loosing a child is the hardest, then maybe loosing a spouse is the 2nd hardest. Did Anna have children? What did she look like? We don't know, but we do know that she was a godly woman. She was a woman of worship, prayer, fasting, devotion, and commitment. Is your devotion a 24/7 devotion? Anna was a thankful woman, a praising woman, and a bold woman. Anna was a faithful witness to Jesus. She wanted everyone to know about Him, and she shared Jesus, and her experience of Him with all. She had been waiting to be bought out of slavery to sin, satan, death, and hell. Now her redemption was here. Her longings and desires had been met in the only one who satisfies, Jesus. Have you found the freedom, liberation, wholeness, love, and purpose of Christ?
15. Do you notice how central corporate worship and spirituality is for these people? Surely they were devoted to the Lord privately, but it certainly did not stop there. They went to the temple because they wanted to be with God's people and involved in corporate worship. Is this true of you? Do you love the church?
16. Luke, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, Gabriel, other angels, shepherds, Simeon, Anna, God, me, you (????) are all witnesses to the truth of who Jesus was and is. As we have journey through Luke so far are you convinced yet (conviction) that Jesus is who you heard He was? Are you certain yet? Do you have surety? Keep reading, keep coming, keep learning, repent, believe, love. Love the one who first loved you.