

Victory of the Lamb – December 30, 2018

Luke 2:28-32 – The Gift inside the Gift – Pastor Bill Limmer

So what did ya get? I received this gift that had like ten layers of wrapping paper on it so I had to go through one layer after another to get the gift. The gift was a really nice sticker that Naomi had made. BTW – I don't believe it was Naomi who multi-wrapped it. I got a whole bunch of clothes. I think it is because my family loves me and they don't want me to look like I normally do. 😊 I think I have already wore almost all of them. I got these really cool wireless ear buds for when I go running. It was in one of those packages that made it super difficult to get them out. Now I can listen to podcasts, audio-books with ease as I run! I got this gift that is actually a gift inside a gift. It has these little cards and on each card is something or me to do in ur community. I want you to know as a heads up, I am going to be working on revamping this gift a little bit and we are going to be sharing it with you sometime in 2019 for an opportunity for us to make a big difference in our community one person at a time.

And by God's grace along with so many of you I opened up the little olive colored baby boy who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and one day would be wrapped in my sin and your sins so that we could be wrapped in God's loving hands for all eternity. That's big Right! Don't ever lose sight that with Jesus you have everything and without Jesus you have nothing.

Two thousand years ago, a saint by the name of Simeon held the gift of Jesus not only in his heart but in his hands. This baby was not just Simeon's deliver but this baby is for all people. The name tag recorded To: **all nations;** ³² **a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.** The baby shattered the darkness of elitism, gender bias, age discrimination, ethnicity, caste system, nationalism and every other barrier by being a gift not only for the home town Israel but for the away team Gentiles. Revelation 7:9 **After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.** Jesus is the light of the world. Lights are a symbol of hope. A person lost in a dark cave turns a corner and is relieved to see a ray of sunlight breaking through a crack. A person adrift on a life raft in the middle of the ocean at night is excited when he's able to say, "I see the light of a ship on the horizon."

People in darkness are delighted to see a light. It's a symbol of hope. In John 12:46 Jesus said, **"I have come into the world as a light so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."** The world in which we live is engulfed in spiritual darkness, and people are groping to find a way out. But Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." The attributes of light reflect the hopeful impact that the light of Jesus Christ still makes on our lives today.

When somebody takes a flash picture, you notice. Or if a spotlight is turned on a dark stage, your eyes are immediately drawn to the light. Isaiah 9:2 reads, **"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."** Is there a darkness in your life that you need to have Jesus shine in on? An attitude, a habit, an expression, a secret, a hurt, a struggle. A lot of times in life we struggle with sin and in our attempts to get out of the sin, we keep looking at the sin (we become hypervigilant) to make sure we stay away from it but in reality what is happening is we are still be controlled by its gravitational pull. We need to quit straining our eyes in the darkness and come into the light of the love and good news of Jesus that fills and fulfills of life instead of trying to find fulfillment by staying away from that sin or sins, or making an insatiable grab for more as

sin does.. Let Jesus shine into the darkness and give you a different view not only of sin but of God. And when you fall into the darkness of sin, and I know that stinks, remember that Jesus lived and died through the darkness of Good Friday to present you to God holy and blameless, radiantly beautiful. What a gift!

Jesus brings another gift with him, the gift of the joy of salvation. Think of it this way: This past summer hurricanes wiped out portions of the east coast. Rescue and emergency crews flooded the area to assist in emergency management and even now crews are still on the scene restoring life homes and lives to the way they were pre-storm. It is a massive effort. God sent his Son Jesus as a gift to rescue, restore, and rebuild hearts and lives that are wiped out from the hurricane of sin. The hurricane of sin separated us from God. Devastation would have reigned if it were not for the gift of Jesus who would deliver us provide relief and guarantee a new life eternity where there will be no pain, suffering, sorrow or death. Jesus didn't just show up. He went to work, to battle. Jesus would fight and win a battle not of long return lines on the day after Christmas, or the battle of long lines as people used up their gift cards, and we are not talking about the battle of a Black Friday crowd but a Good Friday assault. We are not talking about the struggle of a website freezing up but the war against Satan, sin and death. The gift of salvation that Jesus brings is truly amazing. Simeon is holding that deliverer, his deliver and ours in his hands. He was stoked not because of who he was but because of who the baby was. Are you more thankful that you are blessed or that the blesser is in your life? If you are not feeling blessed right now you still have the one who blesses in your life. He rescues, renews, rebuilds, restores.

And with Jesus in his hands and filled with the Holy Spirit Simeon exclaimed: **“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss^[4] 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.”** Simeon recognized the “From” on the name tag. From:: The Sovereign Lord. I love my son to pieces but if I gave you my son, you would have to deal with his ups and downs as a sinful human being, you would have to deal with his inability to meet your every need. But the gift of Jesus comes from the Sovereign Lord. The gift of the child comes from the one who has everything in his hands and is ruling over all things for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose. The gift is from the one whose ways are too wonderful and glorious to trace out. And he gave us the best gift in his son Jesus.

There are a couple of parts that we haven't talked about. Simeon held the gift of Jesus personally. Jesus is your personal gift to. I know that Holy Spirit is calling you to hold Jesus in faith, worship Jesus and share him with the world. The other part of this account that often goes missed is one of the key truths of the Christmas story for our lives: God is always on time. He is never early and he is never late. And so when the fulness of time had come God sent his son born of a woman born under the law, to redeem those under the law. We are on the doorstep of 2019. Our country is following the lead of Europe and we have now moved into a post-Christian, post truth society. This doesn't mean that there are no Christians; it means that our society has abandoned Christianity as its stabilizing center. Christian values are no longer a driving influence in shaping culture. The time we are living in is a lot like the time Jesus was born into. Oh, I know we have gadgets they never thought of but we live in a world that is grasping for truth and a moral code that accepts anything except the truth. Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, “what is truth?” He didn't really want to know the answer if it conflicted with his sensibilities. The same is true today.

Simeon said: **“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.** We live in a world that dictates so much of its action and thought based on feelings even though feelings are not an accurate barometer of truth. And that is why next week we are going to begin a new series called Living Forward which with the Holy Spirit’s power have anchored to the truth and full of love as we live to the glory of God despite opposition and indifference. With the Holy Spirit’s work this series will make a huge difference in our day to day lives as we Live Forward.