

I Found Christ at Christmas

12.14.25

Luke 2:1–38 (CSB)

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. ² This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³ So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

⁴ Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, ⁵ to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ANGELS

⁸ In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: ¹¹ Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people he favors!

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

¹⁶ They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

THE CIRCUMCISION AND PRESENTATION OF JESUS

²¹ When the eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus—the name given by the angel before he was conceived. ²² And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were finished, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (just as it is written in the law of the Lord, **Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord**) ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice (according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, **a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons**).

SIMEON'S PROPHETIC PRAISE

²⁵ There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said,

²⁹ Now, Master,
you can dismiss your servant in peace,
as you promised.
³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation.
³¹ You have prepared it
in the presence of all peoples—
³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and glory to your people Israel.

³³ His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and told his mother Mary, "Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed—³⁵ and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

ANNA'S TESTIMONY

³⁶ There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and was a widow for eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers. ³⁸ At that very moment, she came up and began to thank God and to speak about him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Joy of Discovering Jesus at Christmas.

A. A favorite memory for many of us is watching kids at Christmas.

1. The excitement of the day, the mystery of what's in the packages, the possibilities of the day.
2. I know we grow out of that.
3. As adults, we either buy what we want or what we want that nobody can afford.
4. So, we settle for what we hope is a day off and some good food.

B. One of my joys of pastoring is watching people discover.

1. Discovering truths and stories in Scripture.
2. The joy of praying and worshipping for an hour.
3. The joy of seeing prayers answered and miracles happen.

C. Discovery is foundational to how God created us.

1. Jesus taught us that if we seek, we will...find.
2. Christianity is almost like a game of hide and go seek.
 - a. We are the little kids looking for Father.
 - b. The Father who is fully capable of never being found, doesn't make the game hard.
 - c. He regularly jumps out, leaves clues, and makes discovery obvious.
 - d. We think we've done something great by finding Him, but He saw us coming and made it obvious if we would just look.

D. Today's passage might be more like a game of peek-a-boo.

1. Shepherds, minding their business, experience God in a way that is both amazing and terrifying.
2. An old man, longing for just a glimpse of the promised Messiah, sees a babe from a distance and knows that this is the One for whom he had waited.
3. An old woman peeks into the source of the ultimate and purest joy.

4. Anticipation, surprise, discovery, joy, all centered around the revealing of the Son of God in human flesh.

5. Ultimate power wrapped in weakness and swaddling clothes.

What did the Shepherds, Simeon, and Anna discover?

1. A Savior

A. Shepherds were necessary outcasts.

1. Usually, they were separated from society, spending their time with the sheep and other shepherds.

2. If shepherding was ever a glamorous job, it wasn't in Jesus' day.

3. But in their lineage was a long line of shepherds.

a. Moses was a shepherd for 40 years

b. David was called from the sheepfold and anointed to be king.

c. Psalm 23 declared "The Lord is my Shepherd."

d. Jesus would later declare that He was the Good Shepherd.

B. Shepherds knew what it meant to wait, watch, and observe.

1. This is a common theme in the Christmas story.

a. Waiting.

b. Anticipation.

c. The feeling of being on God's timetable, not our own.

d. The Shepherds, Simeon, Anna, Joseph and Mary, the Wisemen, King Herod, all find themselves on a schedule not their own but of God's.

2. The shepherds not only observed, but they cared for, protected, and provided for critters incapable of living on their own.

3. We have no wild or feral sheep, because they are delicate and dumb creatures.

a. Bob Green used to say a sheep was born looking for a place to die.

b. I don't think being called sheep is always a positive thing.

4. Shepherds were not optional; they were required.

5. Perhaps these shepherds knew what it meant to be the saviors of sheep.

C. Then one day, the darkness of the night is pierced by a blinding light.

1. They had seen comets, shooting stars, and lights before, but nothing like this.

2. Declared to them was the birth of a Savior, dressed in the humblest of clothes.

a. He didn't wear the robes of a king or the armor of a warrior.

b. But he came in weakness, in human flesh.

c. In the manger, we see God at his weakest, yet God at his weakest is still stronger than we are at our strongest.

3. When the shepherds left Jesus that day, they were never the same.

a. They were still shepherds.

b. They were still saviors of sheep.

c. But they went back with the promise that they, too, had a savior.

D. Do you need a Savior this season?

1. Does the weight of sin weigh you down?

2. Do you feel unwanted, unloved, and unseen?

E. Do you know what it feels like to be waiting and watching?

1. Do you find yourself awake at the darkest of hours, waiting, praying, hoping?

2. Are you a person who is watching for the appearance of someone greater than yourself?

3. The shepherds knew what it meant to watch over sheep.

4. Simeon knew what it was to spend a lifetime for a glimpse of someone greater than himself.

The Shepherds found a Savior, and Simeon found a Messiah.

2. A Messiah

A. Simeon is a bit of a mystery.

1. Simeon might have been a priest.
 - a. I have always thought this, and it's a common assumption.
 - b. But we really don't know.
2. Verse 27 says he was guided by the Spirit to enter the temple.
 - a. If he worked there, he would have already been there.
 - b. Yes, he picks up the boy and prays a priestly kind of prayer.
 - c. BUT, it feels like a God ordained encounter and not a traditional blessing of a child.
3. We don't know Simeon's age, but he wasn't a kid.
- 4.. He was in the latter half of life and had invested much of his life anticipating a promise fulfilled.

B. Notice what Scripture says about Simeon:

This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple.

1. He was righteous and devout.
 - a. His life was marked by a genuine desire to serve God and honor Him.
 - b. Seeking and serving God was not a hobby for him but a daily occupation.
 - c. So much so, that Luke writing this decades later knew the character of the man long after he had died.
2. He was also looking forward to Israel's consolation.
 - a. Simeon was looking forward to the day when Israel would be comforted, consoled.
 - b. This was prophesied in Isaiah 12

Isaiah 12:1–6 (CSB)

A SONG OF PRAISE

12 On that day you will say:

“I will give thanks to you, LORD,
although you were angry with me.

Your anger has turned away,
and you have comforted me.

²Indeed, God is my salvation;
I will trust him and not be afraid,
for the LORD, the LORD himself,
is my strength and my song.
He has become my salvation.”

³You will joyfully draw water
from the springs of salvation,

⁴and on that day you will say,

“Give thanks to the LORD; proclaim his name!

Make his works known among the peoples.

Declare that his name is exalted.

⁵Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things.

Let this be known throughout the earth.

⁶Cry out and sing, citizen of Zion,
for the Holy One of Israel is among you
in his greatness.”

c. Simeon believed that he would experience the fulfillment of this prophecy.

d. And the day he was led into the Temple by the Holy Spirit, his eyes saw the One who would bring comfort and salvation for all God’s people.

e. The very child being comforted in his mother’s arms would be the One who would comfort Israel and save her from her sins.

3. Simeon was righteous, devout, expectant, and guided by the Holy Spirit.

- a. Too often we treat the Holy Spirit as someone who doesn't do anything until Acts 2.
- b. But His activity is all throughout Luke 1 and 2.
- c. Notice that devout and righteous are not the only descriptions of Simeon.
- d. But guided by the Holy Spirit.

4. How many of us are content with being devout and righteous, while ignoring the possibility of being guided by the Holy Spirit?

- a. The Pharisees were righteous and devout.
- b. Many followers of false religions are devout.
- c. But God invites us into a life that is guided by the Holy Spirit!

C. Don't dismiss Christmas just because you aren't a kid.

- 1. Too often, we approach Christmas as a child's holiday.
- 2. But the main participants, the people who received the most, were adults.
 - a. The shepherds were adults who needed hope of a Savior.
 - b. Simeon was an old man, needing to meet the Messiah.
 - c. In a moment, we will meet a woman close to 100 years old who was anticipating joy.
- 3. The promise and joys of Christmas are for us adults!
 - a. Not the American version, the real version.
 - b. The version where God speaks to outcasts.
 - c. The version where old men are guided by the Holy Spirit and catch a peek at the plans of God in flesh.
 - d. The version that speaks of miracles, comfort, hope, and joy.
- 4. Perhaps what we all need this Christmas is more of this kind of Jesus.
- 5. A kind of experience that Anna had.

3. A Gift/Joy

A. One of my commentaries says that Anna was 105-106 when this happened.

1. If she was married at 15 and widowed 7 years later at 22
2. She was a widow for 84 years=106.
3. Anna waited multiple lifetimes in prayerful and painful anticipation.

B. Her life was a life invested in God's presence.

1. She never left the temple, serving God night and day.
2. She prayed, and she fasted.
3. Most of us would consider a life of prayer and fasting a wasted life.

C. Yet, here we are talking about her 2000 years later.

1. She had spent a lifetime in the Temple.
2. But, consider, that she would have been in the outer area, a place called the Court of Women.
3. She couldn't go where the men could go, and might have never seen where the priests would enter.
 - a. Women didn't have the same access in that day and time.
 - b. There were defined limits, and Anna was faithful.
4. But it didn't matter: Perhaps her life verse was: Better is a day in the Father's courts than a thousand elsewhere.

D. Her's was Not a life of efficiency but of presence.

1. And all of that faithfulness, for 84 years, led to the day when the baby Jesus was brought into the Temple area.
2. Anna was sensitive to the Spirit and she knew, even from a distance, that this was no ordinary baby but the Son of God.
3. At that moment, she came up to Joseph, Mary, and Jesus and began to thank God.

E. When we invest time in prayer, worship, fasting, solitude, and silence, we are not wasting time but preparing ourselves for the arrival of someone Greater.

1. We admire athletes who spend a lifetime of boring preparation so that, on the biggest stage they make the play, catch the pass, or kick the goal.
2. We admire the singers and musicians who gig in small venues, travel in broken-down vans, and then make it big and play on stages like the Grand Ole Opry, Royal Albert Hall, or Carnegie Hall.
3. Yet we consider it a waste when people invest their lives in prayer, worship, study, and the pursuit of holiness.
4. Yet all the preparation of Simeon and Anna were rewarded in these moments: Setting eyes upon Jesus!

F. My friends, the only award from this life that matters is entering eternity and seeing Jesus face to face.

1. When we see with our new eyes and hear with new ears the Jesus we had waited for, longed for, and prepared for.
2. When I read the Christmas story, I'm reminded of exactly who it is that I'm waiting for.

Close: I love Christmas because I love Jesus.

A. If you strip the season from the glitz and glamour, the time off, the family gatherings, the food, the treats, and the presents, and the only thing left is Jesus, it is still the most wonderful time of the year.

1. Here we have a day celebrated around the world.
2. The name "Christ's Mass" echoes the reality and purpose of the day.
3. Even the abbreviation X Mass carries the Greek CHI, the first letter of Jesus' title: Christ.
4. Jesus Christ is truly the reason for the season.

B. Christmas reminds me that Jesus is the only One worth pursuing.

1. To live a life in pursuit of Jesus isn't wasted.
2. In fact, it's probably the only life that matters.
3. How have we spent/invested our time in 2025?
4. What needs to change for this upcoming year?
- 5 This year, my goal is for every person who has never read the full New Testament to read it.

6. If you have never read the full OT, I want you to meet that goal too.
7. If you are ready, which you are, let's read through all the Bible together this year
8. I'm going to encourage you to pray more at home and with others than ever before.
9. Jesus is the only pursuit that matters: Simeon knew this, Anna knew this, and I think you know this too.

C. Christmas reminds me that righteousness matters.

- a. We know that Simeon and Anna were people committed to following God with all of their heart, their time and their attention.
 - b. At Christmas we focus on joy and happiness, but don't forget righteousness.
 - c. You can have both!
 - d. Simeon and Anna were deeply fulfilled and joyful in the presence of Jesus.
- c. Let's be mindful what we attach Jesus' name to this time of year.

If you follow me on Facebook, you know every Christmas season I make an unapologetic comment: Die Hard is NOT A CHRISTMAS MOVIE.

A movie that takes place during the Christmas season. But I can assure you that the Holy Spirit is grieved by it.

I refuse to call a movie a Christ's Mass move that uses the f-word 57 times or G-D 13 times.

There is no evidence of Jesus, the sinless son of God who died for the sins of the world in this movie.

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation would be similarly classified. It does not honor Jesus in the least.

I could keep going and eventually offend every person in the room.

How terrible it is to celebrate and sell Christmas and never see Jesus?

Prayer

. Wouldn't it be a travesty to celebrate Christmas and never see Jesus?