SERMON 29 DEC 2024 ST PAULS

**"Your Consolation is Comfort from Christ!"**

**Text:** Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Luke 2:22-40
Are you someone who waits ***well?***

Waiting is rarely easy. Whether you’re waiting in line, waiting for news, or waiting for something bigger—like healing, restoration, or hope—it’s hard to wait patiently and faithfully.

Now let me ask a deeper question: ***Are you righteous, devout, and peacefully waiting for Christ’s consolation?*** This question is at the heart of today’s Gospel. Simeon and Anna were waiting faithfully for the fulfillment of God’s promises. They longed for consolation—comfort, peace, and hope found only in the Messiah.

But what about us? Do we wait with that same devotion and expectation? Or do we find ourselves distracted, impatient, or even doubting? Today, we’ll explore what it means to find true consolation in Christ—consolation that comforts us, restores us, and fills us with joy and peace.

Isaiah’s words in today’s Old Testament reading are a song of joyful anticipation. He declares:

**"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness."** (Isaiah 61:10)

Here, Isaiah speaks not only for himself but for God’s people. He envisions a day when the Lord will bring salvation, righteousness, and restoration.

**Our Righteousness is a Gift!**  Notice, will you, the language—God ***clothes*** His people with righteousness. This isn’t something we achieve on our own; it’s a gift from God.

**And then there is The Bride and Bridegroom Imagery.** The Prophet Isaiah uses wedding imagery to describe the joy and beauty of salvation. Just as a bridegroom and bride are adorned on their wedding day, so God adorns His people with righteousness.

But here’s the conflict for us: Isaiah speaks as if this is already accomplished(!), yet God’s people ***were still waiting***. They were exiled, oppressed, and broken. Where was this promised consolation?

 Now… Fast forward to our Gospel reading. We meet Simeon and Anna, two faithful servants of God. They, too, were waiting—waiting for the same consolation Isaiah spoke of centuries earlier.

Simeon is described as "**righteous and devout**," **“waiting for the consolation of Israel.”** (Luke 2:25) Here we see The Role of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. This promise sustained him in his waiting. You and I have this very same promise from God!

There is though… this talk about: The Consolation of Israel. What is this ***consolation*** anyways? Well… It’s the ***fulfillment*** of all of God’s promises— which most important for mankind is the arrival of the Messiah who would bring salvation, peace, and restoration to all of God’s people.

When Simeon holds the Christ child in his arms, he proclaims: **"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace… For mine eyes have seen thy salvation."** (Luke 2:29-30, KJV) This is the moment of fulfillment! Simeon recognizes that Jesus is the embodiment of God’s consolation—a Savior who brings peace between God and man.

Anna, a prophetess, she too has been waiting faithfully for decades. When she sees Jesus, she begins praising God and telling everyone about Him. Anna’s response teaches us something crucial: consolation isn’t just for us; it’s meant to be shared. When we experience the peace and comfort of Christ, we’re called to proclaim it to others.

Let’s return to the question: ***Are YOU righteous, devout, and peacefully waiting for Christ’s consolation?*** If we’re honest (as we really ought to be! Right?), most of us would struggle to say yes, ‘*I am righteous, devout and peacefully waiting’*. Waiting faithfully isn’t easy. What are we like when we struggle with impatience? Well… We become anxious, trying to control situations instead of trusting God. We grumble and complain, focusing on what we lack rather than on God’s promises. And… We get distracted, turning to temporary comforts instead of seeking God’s peace.

This is where The Law convicts us. It shows us ***how far*** short we fall of Simeon’s and Anna’s example. But the Law doesn’t leave us hopeless(!) — it points us to the Gospel, to the One who waits patiently for us and fulfills the promises we can’t achieve on our own.

Simeon’s words remind us that our consolation isn’t found in circumstances or achievements—it’s found in Christ.

**Our Consolation comes to us Through Salvation.** We often think we’ll find consolation in circumstances or achievements, like:

* A perfectly planned life—when everything finally goes the way we want it to.
* Recognition or success—thinking that if we’re acknowledged or appreciated, we’ll feel fulfilled.

***But neither of these can bring true consolation***. Why? Because they’re fleeting – they won’t last very long! They don’t address the deeper ache in our hearts—the need to be restored to God. ***True consolation*** begins with salvation. As Paul writes in Romans 5:1: **“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Even as we wait for Christ’s return, we experience His peace now. Jesus invites us: **"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** (Matthew 11:28) What does this comfort, rest, and peace look like?

* **Comfort is where** Christ reminds us that we don’t have to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. He says, ***“I am with you. Trust me to carry what you cannot.”***
* Rest doesn’t mean our problems disappear; it means we WILL find calm in the storm.
* **And this Peace….**  This peace surpasses understanding because it’s not tied to ***our*** circumstances. It’s the quiet assurance that ***we belong*** to Christ.

How should we respond to the incredible gift of consolation that Christ brings us? By rejoicing, waiting faithfully, and proclaiming the Good News. Isaiah’s words overflow with joy: **“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.”** (Isaiah 61:10)

When we recognize the depth of God’s love for us, the magnitude of His salvation, and the beauty of the righteousness He gives us, ***how can we not rejoice?*** This is ***the heart*** of the Christian life: ***joy*** that flows from knowing Christ and what He has done for us.

Our rejoicing can take many forms: It can ***be quiet***, like Mary pondering the promises of God in her heart. It can ***be loud***, like the shepherds glorifying and praising God after seeing the Christ child. It can ***be shared*** with others… like the songs we sing together in worship, lifting up our voices as one body in Christ.

So… How can you make room for rejoicing in your life this week? Maybe it’s spending time in Scripture, reflecting on God’s promises. Maybe it’s setting aside time for prayer or gratitude, naming the ways God has shown His faithfulness to you.

Rejoicing keeps our hearts rooted in Christ, no matter what storms may come.

Simeon and Anna’s faithfulness is a powerful example for us. They waited patiently for decades, holding onto God’s promises even when the world around them seemed bleak.

But let’s admit it: waiting isn’t easy. The distractions of the world, the temptations of the devil, and the doubts of our own sinful minds can pull us away from God’s peace.

* The World promises quick fixes, temporary pleasures, and false sources of comfort. Like: Social media, entertainment, and materialism can all distract us from the deeper joy found in Christ.
* Satan whispers lies that will feed our impatience. He says garbage like: ***“God doesn’t care about you. He’s not listening. You’re on your own.”*** These lies can lead us to despair or self-reliance. And then there is Our Own Sinful Mind: how Our own hearts often rebel against waiting longer than a micro-second! We want control, answers, and solutions on ***our timeline***—not God’s.

So how do we remain faithful amidst all these challenges? You need to Stay Anchored in God’s Word: Just as Simeon and Anna clung to the promises of Scripture, we need to immerse ourselves in God’s Word. His promises sustain us when we’re tempted to doubt. I urge you to have a great Life of Prayer: for Prayer keeps us connected to God, bringing our fears and frustrations to Him and receiving His peace in return. And folks… go ahead… Lean on the Church: God never intended us to wait alone. Like Simeon and Anna in the temple, we find strength in the community of believers, encouraging one another and holding one another accountable.

Anna’s response to seeing Christ is immediate and overflowing: she praises God and shares the Good News with everyone who was waiting for redemption. Proclaiming the Good News starts with ***gratitude***. When we’ve experienced the consolation of Christ—His forgiveness, His peace, His love—it naturally overflows into our words and actions.

What gifts or talents has God given you that you could use to proclaim the Gospel? How might He be calling you to step out in faith, like Anna, and share the Good News with others?

Proclaiming the Gospel isn’t about having all the right words or answers. It’s about pointing people to Jesus—the source of true consolation and hope.

My dear friends in Christ… Let the words of Simeon become your own: ***“Mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”*** Your consolation is here… now. Christ brings you peace with God, comfort in your struggles, and hope for the future.

So rejoice in His salvation. Wait faithfully, trusting in His promises. And proclaim His love, sharing His consolation with a world that desperately needs it.

For in Christ, your consolation is sure. Amen.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the consolation You have given us in Christ. Help us to rejoice in Your salvation, wait faithfully amidst the challenges of life, and proclaim Your love to a world longing for hope. Fill us with Your peace, and lead us to share it with others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.