

Sermon Topic: All I Want For Christmas Is... by Bishop Wee Boon Hup

Sermon Text: Luke 2:25-35

Introduction

Very often during Christmas, we chiefly consider our own wishes and wants, when we should be considering the needs and welfare of someone else.

In Luke 2, Simeon's prayer was that of peace- not for himself, but for Israel, and not only for Israel, but for all people.

I. Peace as agreement

One way to see peace, is as an agreement, and a means for two parties to come together, resolve an issue and to move forward. For this agreement to work, both parties must have a sense of unity and oneness, and the faith and belief in unity itself. If unity is only outward, then the peace is a legal and contractual agreement. Unity is the oneness of mind and spirit in relationships.

In marriage, there is a spiritual union of two people, beyond just a legal certification and agreement - which does not ensure peace between husband and wife. Lasting peace in a marriage does not come about without any sincere oneness of this union.

II. Peace as order

Peace can be seen as order, where people in an organisation or community work and move within their rightful place and role. There is no peace when everyone does right in his own eyes. There is only peace when people do what they are supposed to do, in deference to rules and laws.

But order is not peace. Order is a product of peace. Order does not ensure peace, and what can be seen as peace and order will be disrupted when the prerequisite conditions do not exist. Peace as order is grounded on honour, which in turn produces submission. When there is orderly peace based only on legal arrangements and arrangements, there can never be lasting peace- people will work to to subvert authority, and to dishonour commitments and responsibilities.

There must be respect and honour towards other parties, and to the people around us and share life with us.

III. Peace as healing

Healing brings peace (ref Isaiah 53). Healing is about wholeness, and when we are whole, peace follows. For true healing to take place, there must be grace to forgive, and to be forgiven. For our wounds to be healed, we need to be forgiven first.

"While we were yet sinners"- Christ set the conditions first for healing, by forgiving us.

But lasting peace in terms of healing, is costly. For Jesus to heal us in soul and body, required the sacrifice of his own body.

And sometimes for our own peace, we need a sacrifice, a dying of something, to gain peace- our pride, stubbornness, or old habits. And these things must be put to death permanently- persistence in old sins after receiving healing, will rob away real change and lasting peace.

Simeon's peace was with God.

He was in agreement with God- in the covenant that God had made with Israel. Simeon knew the scriptures and the traditions, and understood that God was working on the agreement and His promise of Israel's salvation. But Simeon was also willing to wait for a long time, and he sincerely believed that what God said, He would do for Israel.

Simeon also understood that the peace he found in God to be one of order. He knew God prepared and scripted the plan of salvation well- the perfect timing, the perfect occasion, and the right person for the intervention for humanity.

Simeon's peace also came about from an understanding of God's intention to heal humanity through Jesus. But Simeon also paid the price for this peace- he had to wait, for a long time, to meet God in person, and to see His plans for Israel coming into action, before he could die in peace.

Reflection and Discussion Points:

1. Is there something that we have yet to do for someone, before we can say that we are at peace to proceed forward or before we can die in peace?
2. Is there a persistent sin or habit in our lives that we have yet to surrender or put to death, to allow for ourselves lasting peace?