

Christmas Eve Service:

Luke 2: 25 – 32

Merry Christmas!

Welcome! My name is Doug Warren and I am privileged to serve as pastor here at *First Congregational Church of Woodstock*. I am so glad you are here this evening. Below is an outline of this evening's sermon that I hope will help. If you have any questions, I would love to talk with you. Please call me at (802) 457-1304. May the Lord bless you this Christmas!

Simeon's Joy and Ours

1. Why Was Simeon Rejoicing?

2. How Can We Share His Joy?

Jesus was born to fulfill God's promise to be with us. He didn't leave us alone. Jesus came not just to be born in a stable, but to do everything we needed to share Simeon's joy. His birth, just as promised, lets us know we can trust Him to do all that He promised in saving us from our rebellion. Trust Him today!

Pray: "Lord Jesus Christ, the prophets foretold Your coming, the poor longed to see You. The heavens celebrated Your birth; the apostles, the martyrs, the faithful saints through the ages have all repeated the songs of the angels declaring the wonder of Your birth. Your Church praises You today in every human language. Son of God, You humbled Yourself as a servant, raising us up to share in Your glory. We were in darkness and You have given us Light. We were hopeless and You have given us Hope. You have brought us peace and joy and strength that we could never know. Rightly do the angels praise You. Make us rejoice with them and one another at the wonder of Your birth and all that Your drawing near enabled You to do for us as the only Mediator between God and us. Amen."

Act: How do you prepare for the day? Do you do more to prepare yourself against the cold than against the spiritual forces that seek to destroy you? Put on the spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:13-20) God has provided in Christ.

O Come, All Ye Faithful

1. O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, Born the King of angels.

Refrain: O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

2. God of God, Light of Light, Lo!
He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created. *Refrain*

3. Sing, choirs of angels! Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
'Glory to God in the highest.' *Refrain*

4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, Late in flesh appearing. *Refrain*

Cliff Notes on Christmas

Why did Jesus come as a baby born in Bethlehem?

Jesus was born in fulfillment of many promises made by God¹ to His people to deliver us and save us from our sin. We have these promises in the Bible where God explains that in humanity's rebellion against Him, we have received the penalty of our sin, which is spiritual death.²

Unable to resuscitate ourselves, we are lost and without hope unless God Himself comes to save us.³ But that is exactly what He did! Jesus, God the Son, as only He could, came to win us back to right relationship with God the Father. This role of mediator between God and human beings was long foretold as the unique work of the true King of Israel who would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, Israel's greatest king.

What are we supposed to do?

Jesus calls us to repent from our disobedience, to believe and put our trust in Him for the salvation we so desperately need, and to identify with His people as the recipients of His grace. Let's look at each one of these things.

Repent. This means to turn from all the ways we disobey God and to start obeying Him instead. God has made Himself evident to all people⁴ even though we suppress that knowledge, but if we want to know Him as He truly is, the Bible shows us how to live in obedience to His holy calling.

Believe. Jesus calls us to stop believing that we can save ourselves or that any other thing can save us. He tells us to trust that He is the only way to God the Father. To believe *in* Christ is more than just believing that He was born; it's trusting Him to the exclusion of all else. What this baby King was born to do was to live the perfect life of obedience we fail to live and then die as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. His death on the cross paid the penalty for our rebellion and

His resurrection from the dead on Easter morning declared that sacrifice was accepted by God the Father. To believe in Jesus is to trust His life, death, and resurrection to the exclusion of all else.

Identify. Jesus doesn't just save us as individuals; He saves us into His family. He adopts His followers as brothers and sisters. The practice of baptism is the historic way of identifying with this family of God. If you have never been baptized then you should confirm your belief in Christ by being baptized into membership of a Bible-believing church. If you have already been baptized, then you should profess your faith in Christ and be joined officially as a member.

Taking Gathered Worship Home

We don't just repent, believe, and identify with Christ and then go back to life as usual. The life of faith in Christ is wonderful liberty to do what God has called us to do in the freedom of Christ's love for us. It should motivate us to learn more about Him and apply His Word to our lives. Here is a brief devotional you can use each day this week.

Christmas Day—Saturday (December 25-29)

Starting on Christmas, use the litany below for devotionals each day.

Read: Christmas read **Luke 1:1-2:35**. Wed-Thurs read **2:22-35**

Discuss/Consider: What was Simeon waiting to see? Do we always get to see what we want? What had God specifically promised Simeon? What is His response to God's faithfulness? How did the birth of Christ demonstrate God's faithfulness? How does His coming bring about both falling and rising? What needs to be pierced? How can we celebrate together this glorious thing that God has done?

Sing: *O Come, All Ye Faithful* → *Please continue on back.*

¹ The Bible presents itself as God's self-revelation to His people starting as they came up out of Egypt into the Promised Land. These footnotes include references to books in the Bible by listing the name of the book followed by the chapter and verse in which to find the idea summarized above.

² Romans 6:23.

³ Ephesians 2:11-22.

⁴ Romans 1:18-23.