

year off focused on what's wrong with us and how we're going to fix it. That's the wrong thing to be focused on! There is nothing more disappointing than realizing over and over again we are simply not good enough! We're sinners.

But here's what God did for sinners. He sent us Jesus! Remember what Simeon was waiting for? Consolation. Jesus' hug. Jesus hugs sinners. Jesus loves imperfect people. Jesus loves you right now. Even if you're overweight, Jesus loves you and died for you. Even if you haven't met the person of your dreams, Jesus loves you and died for you. Even if you don't land that big position or promotion, Jesus loves you and died for you. Remember what Anna was waiting for? Redemption. Jesus' forgiveness. For every sin you've ever committed, Jesus died to set you free. He wraps his arm around you and says, "You're forgiven. You're loved!" Life isn't about you being good enough. It's about Jesus' love and salvation. Jesus is enough!

Instead of a list of resolutions, here's what I'd like you to have on your mind as you enter the New Year: "I've seen Jesus." It's not wrong to have goals. God gives us passion and energy and talents, and he wants us to use them! He has a purpose for your life, just like he did for old Simeon and Anna. Just remember the truth that covers over everything else in your life—good or bad: "I've seen Jesus." Marriage is a blessing from God, but if God hasn't given you a spouse right now, he has given you Jesus. Jesus is enough. "I've seen Jesus." Our bodies are blessings from God and we want to take care for them, but if God hasn't given you the body someone else has, he has given you Jesus, and Jesus is enough, "I've seen Jesus." Life is a blessing from God, but life isn't meant to last forever this side of heaven. If death is closing in on you or a loved one, remember, "I've seen Jesus!" I have seen Jesus and know his forgiveness and nothing that the future brings can take the joy from my heart! Because having Jesus as my Savior is enough. I've seen Jesus!

The story of Simeon reminds me of a story about an old preacher who was invited back to speak at his former congregation. He was 92 years old. He walked very slowly to the pulpit. Without any notes at all he placed both hands on the pulpit to steady himself and then slowly began to speak: "When I was asked to come here today, your pastor asked me to tell you what was the greatest lesson I learned in my 50 years of preaching." You can picture the anticipation in the church! "I've thought about it for a long time and boiled it down to just one thing—one thing that made the most difference in my life and comforted me through all my trials. Here it is: 'Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong, We are weak, but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me... The Bible tells me so.'" That pastor had seen Jesus.

So have you. You saw him at Christmas. You see him every time you open God's Word. You'll see him today in the body and blood that Jesus shed for you and for your forgiveness. In fact, after the Lord's Supper, what do we often sing? The Song of Simeon. "Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people..." You've seen Jesus. As you ever a New Year, may that thought never leave your mind. "I've seen Jesus!"

Luke 2:21-38  
Pastor Nathan Nass

New Year's Day  
January 1, 2017

**22 When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons." 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." 33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "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. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." 36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.**

### **I've Seen Jesus!**

So have you made your New Year's resolutions? Maybe you don't do that kind of thing. That's okay. If you do, maybe you're looking for ideas. I looked up the most common New Year's resolutions. I bet you can guess what's on the list! "Live life to the fullest." "Lose weight." "Get a new job." "Spend more time with family." "Exercise more." "Quit smoking." "Fall in love." "Have less stress." "Get out of debt." Any of those on your list?

It seems to me there's a common theme running through just about every single New Year's resolution: "I'm not good enough the way I am now!" Isn't that true? That's the point of resolutions in the first place, right? What is it about me that I don't like? What is it about my life that I want to change—that's not good enough. "I weigh too much. I work too much. I spend too much. I'm alone too much..." If you think about it, isn't that a depressing way to start the New Year? We start the New Year off with all the things that we don't like about ourselves and our lives, and then we realize pretty quickly that we're not actually going to change. Isn't that a depressing way to start the year?

People lament that Christmas gets forgotten so quickly. I think that's true. So who is it that forgets Christmas so quickly? We do! We rejoice that "*a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord!*" (Luke 2:11). We talk about the peace and love and joy and hope that fills us. And then, less than a week later, we turn around and say: "I can't be happy unless I lose weight. I can't be content until I change jobs. My life won't be complete until I fall in love..." Do you see the irony? We see Jesus at Christmas and then turn our backs and think about all we want to change in ourselves in the New Year. No wonder so often we live depressed and disappointed!

There's a whole different way to approach the New Year. There's a whole different way to approach life. We see it just weeks after Jesus was born. Once the angels went back into heaven, we don't think much about the rest of the story. But Jesus needed to grow up. His parents needed to take care of the Son of God. Can you imagine that responsibility? The first step was to circumcise Jesus when he was eight days old, just as had been done since the time of Abraham. On that day, they gave their Son the name the angel Gabriel had told them to give him: "Jesus." It was the perfect name. Jesus means, "The LORD saves!"

When Jesus was forty days old, there were two more laws for Mary and Joseph to fulfill. They had to take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem, which was only about five miles from Bethlehem. There Mary had to offer a sacrifice to purify herself after her pregnancy. Then they had to present Jesus to the Lord and offer God a sacrifice for him. Maybe we don't think about this very often, but Mary and Joseph are excellent examples of Christian parents. They did everything for their Son that God commanded. They recognized Jesus as a blessing from God and thanked God for him. They went out of their way to make God the most important part of their little Son's life.

But Mary and Joseph aren't our focus today. When they got to the temple, they ran into some interesting people. "*Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.*" There was an old man in Jerusalem whose whole life was focused on waiting for the Savior to come. Now, we're thinking of New Year's resolutions today. What might people suggest for Simeon? "Get a life! Find a job! Pick up a hobby." Simeon wasn't worried about those things. In fact, if those had been Simeon's resolutions, I think he would have turned out to be a grouchy, old man.

Instead, Simeon had a great New Year's resolution. It was simple: "See Jesus." Somehow that doesn't make the list of top ten New Year's resolutions! Simeon wasn't focused on his failings or self-improvement. He just wanted to see Jesus! And God had given him a special promise: "*It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*" Simeon was waiting for Jesus. He was "*waiting for the consolation of Israel.*" That word "consolation" is a beautiful word that means to "call to one's side," as if someone comes up and puts their arm around us to comfort us. This is what God was going to do for the world in Jesus. Put his arm around us and hug us. Simeon couldn't wait to see it. See Jesus! That was his goal.

And when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple, he got to see him! In one of the most beautiful scenes in the Bible, this wrinkled, joyful old man took Jesus in his arms and said, "*Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people.*" The "consolation" had come. As Simeon hugged that little boy, the reality was that God was hugging him. Nothing else in his life had changed, but he now had all that he needed and more. He was still old. Still near death. Yet at perfect peace. He had seen his Savior! What powerful words to our world today that never seems to have enough! Simeon said, "Now I can die. Now I have it all. I have seen Jesus! What more do I need?"

Jesus was enough for Simeon, and Simeon wasn't the only one. There was a woman there at the temple too—Anna. "*She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.*" It sounds like Anna was a woman who knew what sadness was like. She lost her husband after just seven years of marriage, when she was probably just in her twenties, and she never married again. We don't hear any mention of kids. Anna knew how difficult life can be, so she had learned to turn to God's grace and promises in her struggles. "*She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.*"

Imagine again that someone were making New Year's resolutions for Anna. What would they be? "Fall in love again—find a husband!" Or "be independent. Live life to the fullest!" I wonder how often thoughts like that came into her head. I bet her sinful nature was constantly whispering, "How can you be happy without your husband?" "Why hasn't God given you a family?" "What good has hanging around the church done for you?" Yet, if those had been her resolutions, I think she would have turned into a depressed old woman. Instead, here was her life goal. It was simple: "See Jesus." So she spent day and night in God her Father's house.

Until one day she saw him! "*Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*" Simeon connected Jesus with "consolation"—God's comforting hug. Anna connected him with "redemption"—another beautiful word. To redeem is to set free. This is what Jesus did. He set us free from our sins when he died for us on the cross. Anna had her man—Jesus! Jesus was enough. Nothing else in her life changed. She was still a widow. She still had no husband. But she had seen Jesus. That phrase defined Simeon and Anna's lives until the day they died. Their focus wasn't on themselves or their weakness. It was on Jesus! "I've seen Jesus!"

Do you see a difference? As you look toward a New Year, it's absolutely true that there are a lot of things in your life that are not good enough. In fact, if there's any doubt that we are sinners, just look at your New Year's resolutions. It's good to be honest about our sins and confess them to God. But it's *not* good to make our sins and weaknesses the focus of our lives. It's *not* good to think we can fix them on our own! So often we start the