Sermon: First Xmas Dec. 26 & 27, 2020

Texts: Gal. 4:4-7 & Luke 2:22-40

Title: “Afterglow”

Prayer

Salutation

**Bridge**

**“It’s the day after Christmas and all through the house not a creature is stirring, especially my spouse!” For those of you with families, you know of what I speak. Christmas is over. If you’re lucky, the mess is all cleaned up and the kids already took all their stuff to their rooms. You can now sit and rest. I remember my mom doing that. If Christmas didn’t fall in the middle of the week, and she had time to rest like we do this year, she would grab a book and go sit at her spot on the couch with the TV on low and an RC cola on the table next to her. That gave me an opportunity to go back into the living room and just sit there and look at the tree and ponder what had just happened. At times I’d think, “Is that all there is?” The hype up until the day and the hour came to open gifts, go to grandma’s and church, and now, “Boom”, nothing. To sit and bask in the afterglow of the event was, at times, anticlimactic. I know it can be for some of you as well, especially in the chaos of THIS year of 2020. What I am trying to say is that life will have its ups and downs, because we are all fully human and in need of Christmas. And we wait until the next Christmas.**

**Law**

**But we aren’t alone. I mean, that we wait. In the Gospel lesson, it seems that those that have been waiting the longest finally have their say. Simeon was first. He knew why he was there in the temple that day being prompted by the Spirit. You're thinking, "That Jesus would be there?" No. Because he knew he was a sinner and needed to be saved. That he knew that he wasn't the only one because the people of Israel were sinners, too. And he knew the scriptures. He knew that salvation would come in the promised Messiah. Not to mention the prophetess Anna who was also there waiting for the exact same reason. Even Joseph and Mary knew about the Law and sin, for they had arrived to fulfill the law with their offerings according to the law for Mary and Jesus. They, Mary and Joseph, knew they were sinners, and it must have been a marvel to them that these two old folks at the Temple were speaking of their Son as the promised One. The wait was over. The old covenant was about to be fulfilled in the New One- the Christ. For them and for us. We are just like them. Our theme this advent was to bring to mind just how every single one of the line of Jesus were just like us- sinners. We all sin. We can't make ourselves clean. A Messiah was completely necessary.**

**Gospel**

**And in the fullness of time, the wait was over for us sinners as well. We just don't always remember it that way. We sinners see it as completed. Which, in effect, it was about to be. And we bask in the afterglow. Until the next time we sin. And then we go to the temple and confess our sins. Again, and again and again. And because this young babe in Simeon's arms came to do what he said and rejoiced in, we are able to do so, and the Father hears our prayers, because of this One who came to redeem us from it by sacrifice. And Simeon rejoiced, for he knew his salvation had finally come in the fullness of God's time. Simeon had faith that his salvation from sin was about to be accomplished and he would never have to shed the blood of sacrificial lambs for his sin again. And he praised God! Why?**

**The fullness of time. Paul talks about this. Actually, he's basking in its afterglow. Like Simeon, he saw that all men, no matter who or what they were, Jews, Greeks, slaves or free, would be called the sons of God. We would no longer be slaves to sin. No longer was he or anyone else slaves to the cycle of the law. Sacrifice upon sacrifice upon sacrifice for sin. It was no longer. All because this One, this 8-day old Babe, had come to bring us to the Father, live a perfect life, die on the cross, and rise again, in order for us to be so. All in God's perfect time. In His time, we, through faith in His Son's redemptive work, we are free. And His Word points us toward the future, when He will come again, in the proper time, to bring us to Him and bring His righteousness upon the earth.**

**Conclusion**

**When I sit in the quiet of the night these days after Christmas, looking at the tree, I remember those days as a child when life was so much simpler. And I bask in them. Why? Not because those days are seemingly lost. Oh no. They're not. They bring me joy. But because of the prompting of the Spirit, I've found since then something much better than pondering them. Christmas is no longer anti-climactic for me. Like Simeon, I've seen the coming of the God's Son. To realize I'm adopted as a son of God and know that He has redeemed me as a gift, is an afterglow to bask in the rest of *my* days. Just like Simeon. "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your Word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory to your people Israel."**

**May the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**