



“Looking for Consolation” | Rev. Josh Keller | February 3, 2019

Luke 2:25-35

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the **Holy Spirit** was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the **Holy Spirit** that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came **in the Spirit** into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

“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 for glory to your people Israel.”

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Malachi 3:1-4

... And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come into his temple; ... and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. ...

Hebrews 2: 14-18

... He himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ... For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Intro Question

Thinking about Simeon “waiting for the consolation of Israel”, Josh first referenced two recent illustrations of looking for “consolation”.

- “How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation” describing a sort of overwhelming apathy in which people increasingly realize that the promised opportunity of the American Dream is simply not matched by the drudgery of daily tasks and the reality of the modern world.
- Weltschmerz (a German word that literally means “world-pain” but which might better be translated “world weariness”) –that ache in our bodies and our souls that comes from the world seeming to press in on us from all sides.

Background

Looking for Consolation: Simeon was an old man, born under the Seleucid dynasty (successors of Alexander the Great) and living to see the new empire of Rome establish its brutal overlordship in Palestine. His longing for “consolation” was not an expectation of ‘the good life’. The Spirit was with him, but he certainly suffered from “Weltschmerz”. Having seen the Christ, he was ready for his own consolation ... “let your servant depart in peace” ... imploring God to give him his own longed for release from the broken promises of the world.

A sign of Opposition: And yet Simeon goes on to call deliberate attention to the contradiction or opposition inherent in Christ’s “partaking” of our experience (Heb.). He did not come to fix what is wrong with this world, but to experience it as we do and to bring the disappointment of this life into sharper focus (note Simeon’s words to Mary). The cross is the ultimate “contradictory sign” – using death to bring life and sorrow as a means of consolation. Only in Christianity does God “partake” with us of the bitterness of this life.

Becoming a Consolation: Jesus brought true consolation to enable us to become a consolation to others. Being made new, we are a sign of consolation to the world ... pointing to another world, another king and another way of living.

Discuss:

- 1.) *How do the ideas of Millennial Burnout or Weltschmerz resonate with you? What kind of “consolation” would “fix” these problems?*
- 2.) *How do you see Jesus’ life on earth as a “consolation”? How does that help you deal with your broken dreams or world-weariness?*
- 3.) *How does Simeon’s view of “consolation” strike you? And are you looking for this kind of “consolation”, or just a variation of the one that leads to Millennial Burnout?*
- 4.) *How can you better experience and express God’s consolation in this way? How can you become a consolation to others?*