

One week has gone since we gathered on Christmas day. A lot has happened during this last week. For myself, my daughter went to California and is now home. I had some vacation time and worked in the basement and worked on two cars. I visited with a lady whose husband is dying but they are not members of Immanuel so you all don't have to worry about who it is. I visited with a member of Immanuel who needed to talk about some things. I even worked on this sermon. And believe it or not, I did get some rest.

As we begin 2012, you cannot help but wonder what is in store for our future. We all have things to worry about and things to be excited about. Life is an adventure of the unknown because we do not know what is going to happen this year. There will be unbelievable achievements and crushing disappointments as we move from January through December.

The one thing we can be certain of is that our future is unknown. For many, that fact can cause us a lot of anxiety.

Let's take a moment and think of how Mary and Joseph felt. They knew that their baby was going to be special because God was a part of his being. Just one week ago, their baby was born in a stable. Then they had visitors; shepherds who came to see this baby. The shepherds had an incredible story about how angels had appeared to them and told them about this tiny baby. We don't know much about what happened after that, but we can guess that they were preparing to take Jesus to be presented to the Lord as was the Jewish custom on the 8th day.

That is what is happening in today's gospel reading. Mary and Joseph are bringing Jesus to be dedicated when they see Simeon. And Simeon is ecstatic because he is finally seeing the one whom he has been waiting for.

Simeon exclaimed, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

He went on to say "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed; and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Simeon was able to be dismissed in peace knowing that this baby was going to raise people up and cause them to fall and that many people, including his own parents, would struggle as if a sword was piercing their own soul. He was able to die in peace because he knew and understood that God's mission of salvation had finally begun.

For many of us, when we look at our daily schedules and the demands of our daily lives, there seems to be no way for us to be in peace. We are out of time, patience and especially peace in our lives.

But when we look at what God offers us through the life of Jesus, there is the possibility of peace. We have the opportunity to live in the peace of God where we are able to let go of our problems and challenges here on earth and embrace the fact that God is with us at all times.

We will probably still have moments of anxiety. I know for myself that there are times where everything around me seems to be so high, that I cannot see my way out. But God's peace is still present around and in me.

We know God's plan for us because of our belief in God. Simeon knew of God's plan for the salvation of the world and recognized it in the baby, Jesus. Mary and Joseph probably had quite a few serious conversations about their baby during his first week of life. I think they too had peace because they trusted in where God was leading them. They may not have fully understood all of the consequences that God had in store for them, but they knew that God was with them.

Even in our lives, when we seem lost or when everything is going great, God is with us. When we embrace that fact, we will always be living in the grace of God and enjoying HIS peace.