

22 When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
 according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles
 and for glory to your people Israel.'

33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

In The Bethlehemain Rhapsody – a YouTube broadcast Christmas parody of the song, Bohemian Rhapsody – the puppets sing:

**Shepherds high, shepherds low;
 Wise men come, wise men go.**

On the board outside one of the church venues we visited last night for “Good Night” concerts, I saw that the pastor’s sermon title for today was:

**Christmas is over
 Time to get back to work.**

In a world in which the holiday is too quick to be done; too fast to pack away, today’s Gospel story tells us **there is more to come**. Simeon meets the Holy Family in the Temple, as they came to make a prescribed gift to the Lord, for the birth of this first son.

Simeon knows that the story is just beginning, and after taking baby Jesus into his arms, giving thanks to God for being able to see “the

consolation of Israel” and the light unto the nations, he blesses child and parents, and then tells Mary:

‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

It is, as Paul Harvey used to say:

THE REST OF THE STORY.

Indeed:

**Shepherds high, shepherds low;
Wise men come, wise men go.**

But there’s a whole lot more to this story. And Simeon knew it. And, as a prophet, he told Mary and Joseph these words that they could not then possibly understand. But we, 2,000+ plus years later, understand – because we know ***the rest of the story.***

Yes, we know. But how did Simeon know?

How did this old guy – who was now ready to lay down his life after being granted the privilege of laying his eyes upon the Messiah – how did he know this was the one?

How did he know to go to the Temple that day?

How did he pick out this family, this child, out of all the ones who came into the Temple?

When I think of the Temple, my mind’s eye conjures up the image of [Saint Patrick’s Cathedral](#) in New York City, where for years we used to drop in every day after Thanksgiving. A place so big, with so many

hundreds – no, thousands -- of people passing through. How did Simeon know: **this is the one!**

We know from the type of offering that Joseph and Mary gave – a pair of turtle doves, not a lamb – that these were poor people. But Simeon did not wear socioeconomic blinders; he did not believe that the Messiah would have to have a summer home in Kennybunkport or Hyannis Port.

What fascinates me about this Gospel lesson – so much so that I sometimes use it rather than the appointed Lectionary Gospel text for the Sunday after Christmas (although it IS the appointed Gospel for today this year) – is the phrase upon which the sermon title is based: **“and the Holy Spirit rested on him”**

That phrase is only used elsewhere in the Bible, in the 11th chapter of the First Testament book of Numbers. There it refers to people, in particular Eldad and Medad, who were given the gift of prophecy.

And surely, this was the case with Simeon.

But my meditation upon this word tells me that **and the Holy Spirit rested on him** means more than just a reference to the gift of prophecy.

In a time when much of the world agrees with that sermon title:

Christmas is over
Time to get back to work.

what would it mean to us to experience **THE HOLY SPIRIT RESTING UPON US?**

Sometimes when I walk my dog late at night, before bedtime, I sense the Holy Spirit resting upon me, when I look at the sky. When the clouds fill the sky and are lit with all the light reflected back up from the city below, I feel sheltered as within a womb of God. Warm and safe am I. And when the clouds are gone,, and the stars light up the sky, I feel like the eyes of God are watching me. And I also feel joined with shepherds of millennia ago, who looked up at the same stars and made sense out of them in naming constellations. The **Spirit rests upon me** in those times.

What other times does the **Spirit rest upon us**?

- ⌘ How about **when we awaken** and our first thought is to **give thanks to God** that we have been given another day?
- ⌘ Or, how about when we **stop before the first bite of a meal is eaten and we give thanks**, and really pause to mean what we say?
- ⌘ When I **stop in a busy day, and simply light a candle**, and pause from whatever I am doing and **pay attention to what surrounds me** and to **look for God in the midst of it all**. When I stop for just a few minutes and **“put on pause”** all the hustle and bustle and just **“rest with God,”** then I **feel the Spirit rest** upon me.

OK, I'll do one of those dangerous things in a sermon: Turn to the person sitting next to you and tell them what was happening in your life the last time you **felt the Spirit resting upon you**.

There certainly is that tendency to “**get back to work, the holiday is over.**”

But the **Holy Day of Christmas** is meant to **keep on giving**.

We begin a new year today. Some people make resolutions. I am sometimes amazed by the seemingly increasing number of people who do not make resolutions. Are folks **really content with how everything is going in their life**, or **are they just afraid to try something new that they may not complete 100%**?

In just a few moments, we are going to make some resolutions for the new year, some re-commitments and re-focusing of our life – in the Wesleyan Covenant Service.

Taking time to allow the Spirit to rest upon you is an important part of that re-commitment, of that re-focusing.

But, I’m going to suggest that there is one VERY important component to allowing the Spirit to rest upon us ***that Simeon did NOT have to his advantage.***

And that is a **personal, living, daily relationship with Jesus.**

One of our members likes to tell the joke: “**Q: Why is there an empty chair sitting next to the bed of someone who dies? A: For rigor mortis to set in.**”

But I’m going to suggest that having an empty chair next to us, wherever we are sitting, each day, in which we invite Jesus

☩ to come and to talk with us,

✦ to share with us,

✦ to be in relationship with us

is an essential part of having ***the Spirit rest upon us.***

We can have all kinds of **good thoughts**, **good theology**, and **good Protestant Work Ethic** – but if we don't have the daily RELATIONSHIP with Jesus, who came to be our light, and to be our daily companion – then we might indeed have “**much religion**” but **NOT the Rest of the Spirit upon us.**

The **Rest of the Story** in your life and in mine is **YET TO BE WRITTEN.** My prayer is that each of our stories will be filled with ***the Spirit resting upon us.***

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
AMEN.