

Prayer of Preparation: O come, O Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things mightily; to us the path of knowledge show and teach us in its ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

It's the last Sunday of Advent and it's almost Christmas Eve. Today's Advent theme is love, and I can't agree more. Here's how Simeon describes love, "...*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.*"

For Simeon, love is salvation in the form of Emmanuel, God with us. Simeon was blessed in that before he died, he was able to physically see God's love. Simeon was blessed to see salvation for gentiles, for Israel, and for the world. Simeon was able to see salvation, proclaim salvation to those gathered to worship, and go on to eternal rest in the knowledge that God heard Israel's cries...and God has answered.

It seems so simple, love and salvation existing together in one human body. But it's not. If love and salvation existing in one human body were easy, I'd do it. In fact, if love and salvation existing in one human body were easy, we'd all do it. I look around and I see that we do not love each other as God loves us. I look around and see that we love exceptions to the rule; not the rule where Jesus says, "love God and love your neighbor as you love yourself."

"Love God and love your neighbor as you love yourself" is why I follow Jesus. I love the fact the fact that Jesus grew, learned, and gathered people around him to teach them to love. Here's how Matthew's gospel explains it:

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness.

Matthew's gospel lays it out plainly, Jesus taught the good news: salvation is here. Love is here. Peace is here. Joy is here. Hope is here. Christ, the Messiah, salvation is here. This is the gospel, the good news Simeon saw with his own two eyes. This is the gospel, the good news the prophet Anna told the gathered worshippers: the redemption of Israel. This is the good news Jesus called disciples to share, saying: "***The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...***"

Here's the thing about the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, the good news is for everyone everywhere. And God is counting on each and every one of us to tell it. God is counting on us to be Christ's laborers for the salvation of the world.

Siblings in Christ, God is counting on us to see and know that the manger is a symbol of food for the world. God is counting on us to be the House of Bread. God is counting on us to know, like Simeon knows, and share, like Anna shares, that redemption is here. Love is here...God is counting on us to go tell it. And if you're like me, you tell it loud and proud!

Response to the Word: He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love; Hallelujah forevermore.