

THURSDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

Holding Salvation

... 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.

Luke 2:30-32

What greater desire is there in the human heart than to see God? With the apostle Philip our hearts cry out, "Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied." And the Lord answers: "To have seen me is to have seen the Father (John 14:8-10). (Henri J. M. Nouwen, Behold the Beauty of the Lord, 54)

The verses above from Luke's Gospel are the words of Simeon at the temple in Jerusalem upon taking the infant Jesus into his arms. Jesus, whose name means "the Lord saves," is recognized by Simeon as "salvation" and "light" meant for all people, Jew and Gentile alike.

We can only imagine the power of that moment—a devout elder who has waited patiently for this Savior not only hears about him or sees him in a crowd, but takes the child into his arms—to see him with his own eyes, to hear his crying with his own ears, to feel the warmth of this baby against his own chest.

The greatest desire of Simeon's heart—and ours—has been fulfilled. This is salvation! God has come in glory, light and warmth!

Lord Jesus, in you, our eyes have seen salvation and light. In you, our ears have heard the voice of the Father. Draw as near to us as you did to Simeon, so we, too, may rejoice in your glory. Amen.

FRIDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

The Story of Christ Is Our Story

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him.

2 Corinthians 2:14

Just as we only come to know our true selves by letting ourselves be known in and through Christ, so too, can we only come to know the true events of our time in and through the Christ-event. Our true story reveals itself through the story of Christ. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Selfless Way of Christ, 75)

Our Christian faith gives us a lens through which we view and interpret all things. The life of Christ is the framework for our own lives. Our relationship with God in Christ is the central, defining characteristic of who we are and what we do. Our own stories are—we hope—not just parallels but *intersections* with the story of Jesus Christ. His story infuses ours with meaning and purpose.

We give thanks to God for this relationship that permeates our lives and spreads its "fragrance" wherever we go. This relationship is both our anchor and our compass. What is Christmas but a giving thanks to God for the intersection of the life of Jesus Christ with our own?

Lord Jesus Christ, your life, death and resurrection are a road map for my own. May I walk every road with you. May my life perfectly intersect with yours, from beginning to end. Amen.