

THE BIG IDEA: Long after receiving the gift, we still carry the promise.

The Take-Off

This morning, many of you may be suffering from CIOD - Christmas Is Over Disorder

Instead of enjoying the last few days of the Christmas season, you're already sad about the 363 days remaining until NEXT Christmas.

You sit on the couch and stare at the Hallmark Channel hoping for another Christmas Movie Marathon

You check the weather hoping for cooler temps so you can re-enact Christmas Day

You look a lot like this sufferer of CIOD

[Picture of dog and baby]

I'm not trying to make light of the very real down feelings that many experience after Christmas, but I do want to say this right up front - and it's our Big idea - that the miracle of Christmas isn't over for people of the cross.

We struggle with the season of Christmas ending when we see Christmas as a temporal event instead of an eternal one.

Jesus came to save - he came on a mission - to fulfill prophecies about the redemption of God

Like I said on Facebook this week, the day of Christmas may be over, but the mission of Christmas isn't.

Luke 19:10 - Jesus came into this world to seek and save the lost, and that doesn't end because we've returned the gifts that we didn't want or like.

That mission continues is as real now as it was last week when everyone was singing carols about it.

So as we turn to Luke 2:21-40, we're going to ask the question, "What did Mary and Joseph do after the big day?"

Did they struggle with CIOD?

Let's look at some things that happened after Christmas, and then see what we can learn from them about how we can live with the promise of God today.

Let's start by hitting some of the highlights in verses 21:40

1. The backdrop

- a. "On the 8th day" - v. 21
 - Many of us have already packed up Christmas by the 8th day!
 - Not Mary and Joseph. They're just beginning to unpack what Christmas was all about.
- b. "Time of purification had come" - v. 22
 - According to Leviticus 12, this would mean 40 days since the birth of Jesus
 - Even the most staunch Christmas lovers have the decorations put up by then!
 - 40 days after Christmas is February 2 - Groundhog Day
- c. "Presented him to the Lord" - v. 22
 - Another example of dedicating our children to God
 - If Jesus was, how much more do our children need to be?
 - She presented "two young pigeons" - this indicated their poverty (see Lev. 12)
- d. Simeon sees Jesus - vv. 25-35
 - Simeon has been promised by God that he would see the promise of God
 - He stands with one foot on the Old Covenant and one foot on the New
 - Like those of us who stand in NC and SC simultaneously at Carowinds
 - Look what he calls him - "light of revelation"
 - Notice that he recognizes that there will be periods of darkness ("rising and falling" and "a sword")
- e. Anna sees Jesus - vv. 36-38
 - She had lived as a widow in the temple for many years
 - She never left the temple, but worshiped, fasted and prayed
 - When she saw Jesus - the Light - she recognized God's promise of redemption and told others (v. 38)

2. The takeaways

- a. There's a lot that we can takeaway from this passage about how we should live with the promise
- b. First, before I share them, let me be clear: Jesus is the promise, so when I talk about how we should live with the promise, this is first and foremost about how we live as followers and lovers of Jesus
- c. There are times, of course, when God may promise you something, and I believe these could apply in those times, too.

- d. So, here's what we learn from Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna about living with the promise, and more specifically, about carrying the promise of redemption
- e. ONE: We value the promise
 - We need to peek back into last week's passage to see this
 - Luke 2:19 - she TREASURED all these things in her heart
 - This won't be hard for parents to get, but parents treasure their children, and Mary wasn't different
 - Matt. 13:4 - do we treasure or value the promise of God like that?
- f. TWO: We give the promise to God
 - The temptation will always be there to keep the promise for ourselves
 - But this is the surest way to lose it - see Mark 8:35
 - How much more tempting would it have been for Mary and Joseph to have held onto Jesus
 - Really, giving the promise back to God is us dedicating ourselves to God to be keepers of his promise
- g. THREE: We look for the promise
 - Simeon and Anna spent A LOT of time looking for Jesus
 - That means a lot of time NOT seeing him, and yet they kept looking
 - How about you?
 - Do you look with faith and hope for what you know God will do, or spend more time complaining about what God didn't do?
- h. FOUR: We proclaim the promise
 - What did Anna do as soon as she saw Jesus, the promise of God?
 - She told others; she didn't keep it to herself
 - Neither should we.
 - Matt. 28:19-20
- i. FIVE: We let the promise grow
 - There's not a lot in the Bible about Jesus as a child, and we'll look next week at one of the more important stories, but for today, let's at least note that after all this stuff at the Temple, Jesus went home with Mary and Joseph and grew.
 - Sometimes the fulfillment of the promise takes time, and we've got to allow the promise to grow
 - The good news is that it will, and it will be fulfilled right on time

The Landing

We opened this morning joking about CIOD, but many, many people IN CHURCH will fail to carry the promise because they see the EVENT OF Christmas but not the ETERNAL IN Christmas.

But for lovers of and followers of Jesus, long after receiving the gift, we'll be carrying the promise.

And we'll carry it in faith, because there is NO DOUBT that God will come through.

This is why the darkness can't overcome the light - because the light is a promise and it can't be shaken

I was reminded of this as we drove home last night from Christmas in SC

The moon was beautiful - full, bright, brilliant

Once, though, the clouds covered it, but even though we couldn't see the moon, we could see the light of the moon

Wendy's comment: "The dark clouds can't block out the moon."

When we know we've got God's promise, we don't look to miss it; we look to see it!

Even if it seems to be gone for a moment, we can know that it's still there.

So today, as we prepare to pack up decorations and trees, we remember: long after receiving the gift, we carry the promise.

Let's make sure we carry it well.

Let's pray.