

Walking In The Spirit

At the place where I work Monday to Friday, this past week was tail gate party week. No! It was not a whole week of partying but a spirit of celebration was there from Monday to Friday. Actual festivities did not start until Thursday which was Bosses Celebration Day. We started off the day with a sumptuous breakfast hosted by staff to recognize the bosses. In the afternoon was fierce ball kicking competition to see whoever could kick foot ball farthest. My boss can kick the ball pretty well and by the time I left the parking lot, where all of this was happening, he was among the finalists. I do not have the final score but I would expect he emerged the winner (I later learned he was runner up). Friday was party proper and I participated in a limited way. Many alumni of different colleges participated with different colors, yells, cheers and anthems of their respective colleges filling the air. Needless to say, there was lots of food and it was convenient coming as it did over lunchtime. It was a good enough reason to be away from my desk on Friday afternoon.

I personally like these events which give me material to ponder as I hunt for a sermon and it did not disappoint. Why would grown up men and women spend money, time and effort to do silly things in the name of fun? The point though seems to be that, in addition to the fun a very important process for the organization was taking place. Group fun activities have positive results for bonding and cultivating a spirit of unity in an organization. Fund raising (\$4,500 was also raised to support victims of hurricane Ike) and group fun are a few things management and staff do together on an equal footing without hierarchy of the management structure and they help build a sense of belonging or spirit for the organization. That is the subject of what I want to talk about today and, believe it or not, has connection with today's lesson in Luke namely; walking in the Holy Spirit.

Luke 2: 25-36

Simeon Sees God's Salvation

25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon, and this man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. **26** And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. **27** So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, **28** he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

29 " *Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation
31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.* "

33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. **34** Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against **35** (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Anna Bears Witness to the Redeemer

36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; **37** and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. **38** And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Going back to my tail gate party for a moment, it was my first time so I was more of an observer than a participant. As an outsider in that sense, I was very amused at the kind of fun activities going on, because many of them seemed ridiculous or silly at least; like dunking the boss. Since I had not caught on the spirit of the party, being there made me feel uncomfortable and much like a stranger. The organizers had invested a lot of effort to make everyone feel welcome and they certainly were very hospitable; if one made the choice to join the fun. If I choose to remain an outsider, nothing will integrate me and I will not catch the

spirit of the moment, and will continue to feel like a stranger. I can not speak for those who really participate in the fun but I can testify to what it feels to be foreign, a stranger and not caught up in the spirit of the party and unable to enjoy as much. It feels lonely, lost, puzzled and totally ignorant of what it all means; maybe a bit amused. I could not stay long at the party but others stayed late, wore their colors and were loud. My colleagues seem to have had a ball because they could identify with what was happening. I am sure if I wanted to know more, I just needed to ask and somebody would have loved to acquaint me with the intricacies of all the activities and describe to me their meaning or lack of it. To the insiders, nothing seemed crazy or childish but for me, it would take a long time and much persuasion before I could feel comfortable. I would have to attend several more tail gate parties and participate more in them. When everything becomes comfortable for me to participate in, everything would seem normal and not crazy or childish anymore. I would be blind to those things that seem to bother me now and tail gating would have become second nature to me. Two things would have happened during the process; I would gain insight to the activities even as I would lose the unique insight of an outsider.

When the Gospel speaks of the man Simeon as just and devout and waiting for the Consolation of Israel; it describes a way of life which he led or attributes of his character that contributed to his predisposition to certain circumstances or created an environment that produced certain definite results. How I responded to the party environment made a difference as to whether I enjoyed the party or not. Similarly, the Holy Spirit does not live in a vacuum but lives in our lives when there is room for Him to stay and work in. We create room in our lives for the Holy Spirit by living a just and leveled life that is seriously committed to the things of God and that looks with anticipation for the fulfillment of the purposes of God in our lives and in the world we live in. That is how we make room for the Holy Spirit. We cultivate conducive environment by how we live our lives. The Holy Spirit comes in us at our invitation when there is room for Him and is upon us as He was upon Simeon and gives us counsel like He did Simeon. Simeon was not in the dark in his days when momentous events were taking place in the world he lived in. Instead, he was on the look out for a sign and immediately knew it when the sign took place.

“...26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple...”

Simeon was not alone since the prophetess Anna was similarly looking out for the redemption of Jerusalem. She was living a lifestyle that cultivated an environment that sharpened her sensitivity to the move of the Holy Spirit. She, “...did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day ...” Like Simeon, both were ready for the moment of Divine visitation and were not ignorant to the purposes of God in their time and day.

There can be no doubt we are living in momentous times of transition in 2008 with havoc in the world economy and pivotal Presidential elections here in the United States. We need the wisdom and the skills of Simeon and Anna to help us discern the times we are living in. God is moving in this world in very dramatic ways and we would be well advised to learn from these two people in the scriptures. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches and reveals the things of God but our part is to live lives that will allow the Holy Spirit to be upon us and speak to us. We should not seek an understanding that comes with our carnal minds but instead and above all else, let us seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord help each of us to live lives that will allow the Holy Spirit to be upon us and help us discern to do God’s will.