

**Sripture Reading: Luke 2:21-**

**“And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. 22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." 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."”**

## **My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation!**

**As I promised last week, I want to continue our lessons from the Christmas characters, coming this week to Simeon. Simeon is one of my favorite characters in the Christmas accounts and I never tire of plumbing the depths of this account and his prayer.**

**Last week we saw how the Wise Men came as the “first-fruits” of the fullness of the Gentiles who God will bring into His Kingdom. We considered the obedience of these Wise Men as the great example for us to follow in our lives.**

**This week I want to consider the impact on the broader world as we review the fulfilment of what Simeon understood about God’s grand plan of salvation. We could think of it this way:**

- **Last week we looked at the details and this week we consider the big picture!**

**Both lessons can and should be learned from either the Wise Men or Simeon because they are important to a healthy Christian walk. We must always pay attention to the details to obey, while always remembering the grand scale of the work that God is doing in the world!**

**Both the Wise Men and Simeon are examples of simple obedience and both had a great vision of what God was planning to do, or as we have pointed out many times...**

- **They clearly understood that the coming of Jesus changed everything!**

**Luke introduces Simeon as one who is “just & devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.” One who is waiting for the promised Messiah!**

- **A faithful Saint who the Holy Spirit had comforted with a special promise and guided to the Temple on this very day.**

**When Simeon sees the baby Jesus Luke tells us that he, “took Him up in his arms and blessed God.”**

As I have often taught here at Church of the King we should see Simeon as...

- A Man who had hope
- A Man who had contentment
- A Man who had a great vision

Simeon can bring comfort to us in the hustle & bustle of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century... He had things the world searches for in vain, expending vast sums of time & riches trying to find them. Simeon had hope because he lived as a just and devout member of God's Covenant people believing the promises that God had made down through history. Simeon was content to be "waiting" for the "Consolation of Israel." – The coming of Messiah! And Simeon had great vision, believing that God would show him the Messiah and that this Messiah would be the light of the whole world!

Then, holding that tiny 40 day old baby in his arms, Simeon prays, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel"

- Here we see Simeon's hope, contentment and vision!

Simeon followed the Spirit's leading and sees his hope fulfilled as he is allowed to hold the baby Jesus, knowing that He IS the promised Messiah. His hope was in the promise of God, as it must be with us: Christ has promised to build His Church and that is the promise in which we have our hope. This is why we baptize our covenant Children, demonstrating that our hope for them lies in God's promise! Simeon is content with what God has allowed him to see, an important lesson that we must all learn:

- God has promised to conquer the nations through His Church: And He will, even if we cannot understand how all the details will be worked out!
- We are to be content with where God has placed us, based on the hope that we have in His promises!

Finally, Simeon demonstrates his vision when he prays, "Your Salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles."

Here is a single 'just and devout' Jew who held no station that we know of, holding an infant son of a poor family, not able to afford the sacrificial lamb, believing that this infant was the light God had promised through His prophets to bring to the whole world.

- It is here with the grand vision of Simeon that I would like to focus this morning.

To help us understand how it should impact us, I want to also return to some of the final lessons from our study of Luke's orderly account. The final chapters of Acts gave us the details of how Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, reached Rome, the religious and political center of the ancient world! And there we saw a similar message which came with the prayer of Simeon when we find Paul "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."

It was no accident that Paul's ministry ended at Rome and surely the final days of his journey demonstrated its importance:

- The final leg of that long journey was traveled along the famous Appian Way where many triumphant Roman generals marched back to Rome in victory.

The road where Spartacus & his fellow rebel slaves were crucified by General Crassus who then made the triumphant march back to Rome on that same highway. Now another prisoner was making his way to Rome via the Appian Way...

- A prisoner who would also die at the hands of his Roman captors!

But not before he had proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of Jesus! Had Emperor Nero known who was about to march into his city he might have sent his generals to kill the Apostle Paul...

- But that would not have stopped the forward march of Christ's Kingdom.

Paul's journey was filled with all the trials that he anticipated in Jerusalem along with many traveling perils he may not have anticipated... Paul arrives in Rome as the Saints there had prayed and now they would have remembered Paul's final promise given to them in the Epistle to the Romans: "And the God of peace shall crush Satan under your feet shortly."

Rome was the final great empire that God had shown Daniel in the King's dream, that were to reign until the coming of Jesus, Who was the stone cut without hands coming to smash that great statue. As we know from the Book of Revelation & recorded history, Rome would soon turn from a protecting Empire to a devouring Beast under the sway of Satan...

- And thus we have the promise from God that Satan would soon be crushed under their feet.

In just a few hundred years, the Mighty Roman Empire will be all but forgotten and Christendom would be filling all of Europe with more and more blessings and freedoms as the Kingdom of Jesus filled the earth. Soon, the Emperor Nero would begin the first of many vicious campaigns to destroy the Church leading to the martyrdom of many Saints. But just as King Herod failed to kill the baby Jesus, so Nero and all those who follow in his ways have failed to kill the Church or destroy the Bible. Down through history, many have tried and many have failed, but the Kingdom of Jesus continues to grow:

Because as we learned over and over in the Book of Acts...

- The Holy Spirit knows where history is going & He makes sure all of God's purposes are fulfilled.

So what does all of this mean for us today living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

We are those alive as we enter the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennial since God became flesh and dwelt among us? *[yes, we have the advantage of seeing what happened in the first two!]*

So first and foremost it means that we should continue to have the confidence of knowing that the Spirit of God is taking history where He intends it to go! Just as Satan's rule over Rome was crushed by the Gospel, so all the nations of the earth will some day kiss the Son as declared by Psalm 2! We see this great truth explained by the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians chapter 15 where at verse 20 we read: "20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death."

That is the hope of the Gospel that we are to believe and work for today, tomorrow and every day until the Spirit of God has finished His work!

- **Do we find this hard to believe?**

**Sure we do IF we are honest... Think of all the bad news we have to weigh us down or even the bad theology many of us learned that actually expected things to get worse & worse before Jesus could return!**

**Does the Apostle's view of history seem overwhelming to us? Again, YES, if we are honest, but we must remember the principle we are taught when facing mammoth tasks...**

**How do you walk a hundred miles?**

- **One step at a time!**

**Or the more humorous question of how to eat an elephant...**

- **Again, one bite at a time!**

**So how does the Spirit of God fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus?**

- **He uses one simple step of obedience at a time!**

**That simple obedience that we studied at length last week!**

- **Yes, it is all those little things that add up to a worldwide conquest for Jesus!**

**Each child who learns to honor their parents... IN THE LITTLE THINGS!**

**Each mother who learns to see the joy of obedience in washing those same dishes after lunch that she did after breakfast, or changing that diaper that was new & fresh just moments ago!**

**Each husband who shows REAL love to his wife, not in the grandiose fanfare that Hollywood tells us to seek, but rather in remembering to actually tell her that you love her on a regular basis, by opening her door, honoring her in front of others...**

**And yes, by even changing a diaper or doing those dishes occasionally!**

- **THESE are the 'good works' of Ephesians 2:10, that the Apostle Paul tells us that we were created in Christ Jesus to do, as His workmanship!**

**These are the simple things that God the Holy Spirit will weave together into the glorious tapestry that is the history of Christ's Kingdom filling the earth.**

**In closing I want us to see how these two messages tie together is some very practical ways for our Christian walk: I spoke about the focus on the details and a focus on the big picture. Today you will often here people speak of someone being a "detail person" or someone else being a "big picture person!" Sadly we can use these labels to excuse someone for being weak in the other area...**

- **So my challenge this morning is for us to remember that as Christians we are to be BOTH!**

**We are to be a detail person who remembers the big picture and... We are to be big picture people who pay close attention to the details!**

**Let me share some very practical examples of how this should work itself out in our everyday lives, which if mastered brings great contentment and joy...**

**When children arrive, there are a whole lot of details that must be attended too! They must never be neglected, but there is no reason as we look down at the child during a diaper change or pray with them as they are put to bed that we cannot remember to thank God for the amazing gift He has given us and remember that we are raising a disciple who will be called upon to serve his or her Lord faithfully as well. *[perhaps thinking of some examples from history!]***

**When young couples are considering marriage or newly weds are growing & maturing in their new life together there are again many details that we must pay attention to along with all those emotions and special times in the moment!**

**Here again as you are sharing a conversation or prayers about the present opportunities or challenges, it is a good thing to allow some reflection on what the next forty or fifty years might hold! [& the impact of your family in history!]**

**This is what it means to focus on both the details and the big picture! We must not let the focus on the details obscure the very purpose for those details and we must not be the kind of dreamers who never quite get around to any of the details that can bring the fulfilment of those very dreams.**

**This can also be seen as young men begin a business or even a new career: Again you have all those details and they can be very overwhelming, but you will surely fail if they are not attended too!**

**On the other hand as you finish whatever the days task might have been or make a final review of the books to see if your business is going to survive for another week, it is a very good thing to remember the dreams you had that set you on this important path!**

**A person who allows themselves to drown in the details will be miserable and a day-dreamer who never completes the task at hand will surely fail.**

➤ **And finally, these principles apply even with our church life.**

**This morning we shared with those interested in membership some of the priorities and distinctives of Church of the King & the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.**

**They are a part of the vision that the founding families who were a part of planting our local church, or those who started the CREC in the 1990's shared and wanted to bring to fruition.**

**Now I can assure you that there were many many details to be attended too with both over the years, but when we bring in new members or share with each other at an annual meeting or Presbytery... We should always take some time again to reflect on that vision and assess where we are going so that we are not just paying attention to a lot of empty rituals and details.**

*[again thinking of some examples from history!]*

**And of course all of these areas must be seen in the general context of being an important part of the overall work of the Spirit in filling the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus!**

**As I mentioned at the beginning, this year I used the Wise Men to speak about the importance of obedience in the details and Simeon to remind us about the big picture, but we could just as easily have worked it the other way around, because as faithful Saints all of these men were ready to carry out the detailed tasks set before them while never losing sight of the big picture.**

**May it always be so with us as well!**

**Communion Meditation: Hebrews 12:1-3**

**“1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”**