

**Scripture Reading: Luke 2:21-35**

**“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."”**

## **"The Faith of Simeon"**

**As many of you know, Simeon is one of my favorite characters in the Christmas accounts and it is a blessing to focus on his faith and prayer here on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent for 2013: The week where we focus on love! Here at Church of the King we have used the simple prayer that Simeon lifted up as our closing hymn as we are commissioned and sent forth to serve our living and reigning Savior each week along with the Gloria Patri.**

- **The occasion of this prayer and the content of this prayer has much to teach us as we seek to serve the Lord of Glory in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

**Last week we saw the announcement of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. From Luke’s account we know that Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day.**

- **This is something that is easy to just pass over but it was a very significant event.**

**The command for circumcision was given to Abraham in Genesis 17:10 [yes, we are back in the Book of Beginnings!] The institution of circumcision comes as God renews His covenant with Abram & gives him the name Abraham:**

**Genesis 17:1 “1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, Jehovah appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. 2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." 3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." 9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child**

among you shall be circumcised; 11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. 13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

- To understand why God put such importance in circumcision we must look both backward and forward.

Yes, back to the Garden we go once again... After Adam's rebellion we saw how God was gracious... Remember? God gave them the Gospel with the promise that the Seed of the Woman would crush the head of the Seed of the Serpent! We learned how God was even gracious in driving them from the Garden so they would not partake of the Tree of Life in their fallen state. And...

Yes, God gave them a covering with the skins of animals... The first shedding of blood in the story of man's redemption! Now when God makes His covenant with Abraham we see it sealed with a bloody sign: A cutting away of the flesh to remind man of the problem of sin!

And looking forward we come to Jesus eight days after His birth receiving this sign of the covenant, becoming a part of God's covenant people in His humanity and more importantly, the first shedding of His blood, not because He was sinful, but because He had come as THE sacrifice for sin!

- And this is why we are no longer required to circumcise our infant males on the eighth day because when they are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we claim for them the promise of God to stand in the righteousness of Jesus just as the Saints of the Old Testament did with their children!

After another month the baby Jesus was brought to the Temple again to fulfil all righteousness as He did with His submission to baptism later in life. The first born male was dedicated to God remembering that God had purchased the first born of Israel when the death angel passed over the homes that had blood on the door posts:

- Another great reminder that the blood of Jesus is the only means that we or our children have to escape eternal punishment!

Mary submits herself to the temple purification after childbirth which were another reminder of the reality of the fall and utter corruption of mankind. It is at this point we are introduced to Simeon, 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 he sees the baby Jesus Luke tells us that he, "took Him up in his arms and blessed God."

Simeon's actions reflect what we will see in Simeon's prayer:

- He had hope
- He had contentment
- He had a vision of the future

These are the lessons that Simeon can teach us and our church in the hustle & bustle of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century...

**Hope, contentment and vision are things the world today 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 a great vision of the future, believing that God would show him the Messiah and that this Messiah would be the light of the whole world!**

**Simeon then prays a simple prayer that has been repeated and sung by the Saints for almost two thousand years: 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"**

**What we see in this simple prayer is Simeon's hope, contentment & vision:**

- **Simeon has 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: This is why we baptize our covenant Children, finding our hope in God's promise for them and why we are sent forth with the Great Commission believing that the Kingdom of Jesus will fill the earth! Simeon is content with what little God allows him to see, knowing that he held the Savior of the world in his hands. Simeon knows that God's Messiah would suffer and go on to reign but those are things he would not see!**

- **We are to be content with where God has placed us, based on the hope that we have in His promises! [mention our failures]**

**Finally, Simeon reveals his vision of the future 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 one 'just and devout' Jew who held no station that we know of, holding an infant son of a poor family that could not even afford the sacrificial lamb, believing that this infant was the light which God had promised to the whole world. The Jews at that time had become a selfish, self-centered people with no desire to be a blessing to the nations of the earth as God had promised Abraham: What Simeon said about the Gentiles would have been shocking to them!**

**But Simeon was a faithful man who believed the promises that God had made and knew that God's salvation would include the Gentiles just as the Prophets had foretold:**

**Isaiah 42: "1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. 2 He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. 4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law." 5 Thus says God Jehovah, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: 6 "I, Jehovah, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house."**

**Isaiah 49: "6 Indeed [Jehovah] says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' "**

**7 Thus says Jehovah, The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, To Him whom man despises, To Him whom the nation abhors, To the Servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, Because of Jehovah who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You."**

**And finally, Isaiah 60: "1 Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of Jehovah is risen upon you. 2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But Jehovah will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. 3 The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising."**

**Now one could certainly wonder how all the religious leaders of that day could have missed what seems to be so clear about salvation going to the Gentiles...**

- **Maybe it is a bit like those who cannot find ANY condemnation of sodomy in the Bible today!**
- **In any case we have Simeon who is a Saint with great hope, a Saint who was content with his station in life and a Saint who was a man with a clear vision of the future.**

**That is the example he should be to us as individuals and as a Church. With anything less we are just "playing church" and will risk being as blind as the religious leaders of that very day who missed Jesus when He was in their very midst at the Temple. As with Simeon, our hope is in the promises of God: His sure Word, which is why we must be very serious about a New Year's resolve to be men & woman, boys & girls of the Word. We must be a people that are content with where God has placed us:**

#### **We must be content as individuals...**

**Not thinking we are too smart, not too dumb, not thinking we are too short, or too tall, not thinking we have the wrong hair color... or not enough hair!**

**We must see ourselves as blessed to be in God's Covenant, Baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one of His children: Having the hope of seeing Jesus, not as a new born child, but as the Lord of Glory now seated at the Father's right hand!**

#### **We must be content as families:**

**Not thinking it is too big, or too small, Not thinking we are too rich, or too poor, Loving those God has placed there! Believing that God's great promise of salvation is unto us and our children!**

**Young people believing that God's promise of life as a result of obedience to their parents is a REAL promise that bears much fruit, including a godly spouse if you are to be married.**

#### **We must be content as a Church:**

**Not thinking we are too big, or too small, Not thinking we are too fancy, or too plain in our practices.**

- **Rather we must believe that we are the Body of Christ and that EACH & EVERY member has an important role to play.**

**As we learn to be content in the hope that God has given us, we will be a people of great vision: Believing that God will bring light to the Gentiles and take the Gospel to all the nations! *[mention O'Rourke quote]***

- **God will save the world, we just need to remember to wash the dishes:**
- **& to be content while doing them!**

**BUT how do we live the "just and devout" life that Simeon gives us an example of? How can we be a people filled with real hope, content with where God has placed us and consumed with God's vision of His Kingdom filling the whole earth?**

**Proverbs says that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord...**

**Jesus said, “the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”**

**And Paul told the Saints at Corinth: 13 “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many... 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”**

**If we want to be a people filled with real hope, content with where God has placed us and consumed with God’s vision of the future, then we must heed these instructions and principles, as individuals and as a church...**

- **We must be a people who rightly fear God and look to His wisdom.**
- **We must be a people who rightly worship God as He has commanded**
- **We must be a people who rightly function as the Body of Christ**

**Allow me to close with some wisdom from Proverbs chapter four as a reminder of how God blesses such obedience! King Solomon is instructing his son about the ways of righteousness so he can be ‘just and devout’ like Simeon. He uses the familiar theme of light contrasting it with darkness in verse eighteen:**

**Proverbs 4:18 “The path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble. 20 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. 21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; 22 For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. 23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. 24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. 26 Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.”**

**Do you want to be “just & devout” – Knowing the hope, the contentment and the vision of someone like Simeon?**

**Then commit anew to study these Books of Wisdom!**

- **That is wise counsel for anyone who wants to be a part of the fulfillment of Simeon’s prayer!**
- **Then we will be able to truly share the message of Christmas: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son!**

**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.”**