

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."”

The Hope, Contentment & Vision of Simeon

Simeon is certainly one of my favorite characters in the Christmas accounts and I always enjoy focusing on him when I bring the Christmas message! Now of course some of you who have been here a long while may think, wait a minute, I have heard some of this before! Well in my defense I could point to that beloved hymn where we sing: “I love to tell the story of Jesus and His love!”

Or as the Apostle Paul told the Saints at Philippi: “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Phil. 3:1). Or as Pastor Doug Wilson rightly pointed out this week in a message to encourage pastors: “The gospel preached rightly is food, not simply information. You don’t ever refuse to have lunch because you already know what a hamburger tastes like. You do in fact know what it tastes like, but that knowledge cannot be chewed and swallowed. Put food on the table for God’s people, and there is no shame in putting the same dish on the table from time to time. The old-timers should love it, and the kids growing up in the church have never had it before. Remind, review, repeat. One of the great sins in Scripture is the sin of *forgetting*.”

So again we will consider how Luke presents Simeon as “just & devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.”

- A man who is faithfully waiting for the promised Messiah!

When Simeon sees the baby Jesus Luke tells us that he, “took Him up in his arms and blessed God.” Simeon’s actions here are reflections of what we will learn from his prayer and of course it all relates to the peace that surpasses understanding which we considered at length last week:

- Simeon is a man who had hope.
- A man who had contentment.
- Simeon was man who had vision.

Truly we Christians need a faith like Simeon's to serve well in the hustle & bustle of the 21st Century...

- **Simeon had hope because he was a man at peace with God believing the promises God had made down through history; waiting patiently for God to work on His timetable & not his own.**
- **Simeon was content living as a just and devout member of God's Covenant people studying and believing the promises of God as he waited for the "Consolation of Israel." – the coming of Messiah!**
- **Simeon had great vision, believing that the baby he was holding in his arms was not just his personal Savior, but rather the Messiah Who 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"

Here in Simeon's prayer we have the context of the hope, contentment and vision illustrated in his actions:

- **Simeon 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:

- **This is why we baptize our covenant Children, finding our hope for them in God's promises!**
- **Simeon is content with what God allows him to see at that time and that is one of the great lessons for us to learn today!**

God has promised to conquer ALL the nations of the earth through His Church by the power of His Spirit!

- **And He will, even if we cannot understand how it will be done based on what we can see today!**

We are to be content with the moment in history where God has placed us...

- **Based on the hope that we have in His promises, just as Simeon did that day there in the Temple!**

Finally, Simeon reflects 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 '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.

- **So, Simeon is a Saint who had great hope, a Saint who was content with his station in life and a Saint who was a man of vision seeing what would come in the following centuries...**

That is the example he should be to us as individuals and to us as a Church going into this New Year with assisting our new Church plants, with us sharing the Gospel and discipling our children and Lord willing with us helping new believers: As with Simeon, our hope is in the promises of God: His sure Word!

- **This is why we must be very serious about having a New Year's resolve to be men & woman, boys & girls of the Word.**
- **That is what I want to focus on in a moment as our application and challenge for today...**

But first we need to see how this contentment of Simeon's must be our own as well... We must be a people that are content with where God has placed us in His grand story of redemption:

We must be content as individuals... Not thinking we are too smart, nor too dumb: Not too short, nor too tall: With the wrong hair color or not enough hair. Our contentment comes from knowing we are 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 serving Him as the Lord of Glory at the Father's right hand as the Spirit fills the earth with His Kingdom!

We must be content as families: Again, not thinking it too big, nor too small: Not too rich, nor too poor. 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. Content to know that God is in control even when our families are broken up or loved ones lost in our fallen world, knowing that God will still take history where He intended it to go and bless us as a result!

We must be content as a Church: Not thinking it too big, nor too small: Not too fancy, nor too plain

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

Content that most of us have been born as American Christians with all the challenges that can bring! Content that God has His Church right where it needs to be in the course of history, despite all the problems we see with divisions and apostasy today!

As we learn to be content in the hope that God has given us, we will be a people of great vision: Believing with Simeon that God will bring light to the Gentiles and take the Gospel to all the nations!

This is a BIG task that can easily overwhelm us and seems impossible to many Christians today...

- But it will be accomplished one step at a time and all in God's good timing. *[mention O'Rourke quote]*
- God will save the world: We just need to remember to wash the dishes:
- And to be content while we are doing them!

In our text, Simeon gives us one more important lesson as he turns to Mary to give her words of comfort and warning: Simeon knew that Jesus was God's Messiah... The suffering Messiah!

Simeon knew this because he was familiar with and believed God's Word given down through the ages. Perhaps Simeon had the words of Psalm 22 in mind when he said to Mary: "a sword will pierce through your own soul also," warning her of the agony she as the mother of Jesus would suffer at the foot of His cross.

Yes, Jesus would be rejected of men, and through Him "the thoughts of many hearts" would be revealed, separating the sheep and the goats, like the two thieves that would die at the side of Jesus:

- One going to paradise and the other to eternal damnation.
- That is the work of Jesus that faithful Simeon could see as he held the baby Jesus and he knew this because he knew the Scriptures!

So our challenge is to 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 our church plants here in California are going to succeed; if Church of the King in to going to grow and mature and if the CREC is to remain strong & healthy:

- Then we must heed these instructions, as individuals and as a church and as a denomination...
- We must be a people who rightly fear God
- We must be a people who rightly worship God
- We must be a people who rightly function as the Body of Christ

Knowing all this, we strive to rightly preach the Word here at Church of the King encouraging people to know and believe the Scriptures the way faithful Simeon did. We trust that our parents take seriously their calling to raise the children God has blessed them with in the fear and admonition of the Lord and that includes knowing His Word with much study and a lot of memorization.

However, we must all commit to our own individual study as well, which is the real example that our children and the watching world will see.

- Let me give you such a challenge for the New Year!

There is no set program in the Bible with regard to our personal devotions, but we are encouraged to know and meditate on God’s Word! [*mention Psalm 119*]

That means we need some sort of regular time in the Word and I will share my convictions as an example, but certainly not as the only way. I know some of you do much more and that is a great thing which can encourage me to do more!

- And if you are doing less, I hope I can encourage you as your Pastor to do more as well.

Yes I am making a personal appeal as your pastor in the same way that the Apostle Paul did with the Saints he loves in the city of Philippi:

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”

If that is not enough, I will also share one important illustration of why we should be people of the Word that I used often with my own children: Proverbs says that the knowledge and instructions we learn from the Bible, are more precious than silver or gold: If I were Bill Gates up here telling you how to access my billions I would certainly have your attention, would I not?

- King Solomon says what I am offering is more valuable!

With that in mind I want us to see that it is important for our studies to be consistent and comprehensive.

The Apostle Paul tells us that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

That means that ALL of Scripture is profitable, including all those genealogies and repetitive parts that we often want to simply skip over! We should remember that the faithful Saint we have in our text today as our example had ONLY the Old Testament Scriptures to give him hope, contentment and vision!

- And as we often point out, Jesus chided His own disciples on the road to Emmaus for not knowing how they revealed Him & His work.

So here is what I have learned to do: Consistency should mean being in the Word each and every day & I have always found that morning is best... Whenever I say, I will get to that a bit later it is soon tomorrow and I am feeling guilty about missing what I was going to read the day before!

To help with this I hold myself accountable by linking my readings to chapter numbers that correspond to the days of the month [makes it tough to just skip over days].

- This has been carried over into our church calendar in case you have never noticed. ☺

January has thirty-one days and so I read the chapters of Proverbs during that month, so that can be a great place to begin in the New Year! There are 150 Psalms which divide nicely into five groups of thirty and I use them for the next five months. Then we have July with another 31 days so back to Proverbs and Psalms again to finish out the year.

- This way I read through both of those Books twice each year & I can assure you that is a very good thing!

In addition to those readings I read through the Old and New Testament chronologically reading at least one chapter from each Testament each morning. This ensures that I am reading the whole Bible on a regular basis without neglecting any portion and I am never reading the same portions together...

- And it is amazing how many times I find some new way to see how things are related.

As I said, there are many ways to be consistent and comprehensive and if you are going about it in a different way then may God richly bless your efforts.

- IF you have not been doing a very good job of being in the Word, may I offer what I have suggested as a challenge for the New Year to do at least that much.

King Solomon instructed his son about the ways of righteousness and the importance of the Word:

“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.

Do you want to be “just & devout” – Knowing the hope, contentment and vision of someone like Simeon? Then commit anew to study these Books of Wisdom and the rest of God’s Word!

- Wise counsel for a New Year
- Wise counsel for a New Church!
- Wise counsel for anyone who wants to be a part of the fulfillment of Simeon’s prayer!

AND it would bring joy to me as you pastor in the same way the Apostle Paul wanted to rejoice in the faithfulness of the Saints in Philippi:

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.”