

## The Mission of the Messiah

- Luke 2:25-35
- Last Sunday we looked at the announcement of the multitude of heavenly hosts, the angels, who declared glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased. And here we see the confession of Simeon when he takes the promised Messiah in his arms: “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace.” And as we said last week, the truth is that none of us can die in peace unless and until we have met the Christ. He is the consolation of Israel and He is a light for revelation to the Gentiles. Three quick things about what we can learn from Simeon’s story and the first two relate back to LAST week’s text: 1. We are ready to die when we see the salvation of the Lord. That doesn’t mean that the Lord is ready to take us home then! But it does mean that we are not ready to die without seeing and receiving for ourselves the salvation of the Lord. Have you seen it? 2. Peace is only found through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. “Lord, now I can die in peace.” Now we can LIVE in peace. 3. God uses ordinary people to proclaim His extraordinary message: that Christ the Savior is born. We see that in God’s choice of Mary to be the mother of the Savior We see it in the shepherds, the first and most unlikely evangelists. And we see it in Simeon, a man about whom we know almost nothing, except that he received a promise from the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.
- Let’s look at this text today and consider three things together from it. First, the significance of the elderly. Second, the sovereignty of the Spirit. Third, the mission of the Messiah.
- **The significance of the elderly**
- We are not told how old Simeon is, but we know that he is old. That’s the only way this story makes sense. He had been promised that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. We also know that Anna is old (in the next section). She is at least 84, and if the reading in verse 37 does not mean that she was an 84-year-old widow but that she had been a widow for 84 years, then she is probably closer to 100. What else do Simeon and Anna have in common? They are godly. Simeon is “righteous and devout” (verse 25) and Anna has basically lived in the temple, doing nothing but worshiping God night and day. Who are two other elderly people who figure prominently in the Luke’s story of Jesus’ first advent? Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. Luke tells us in chapter 1 that the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah while he was in the temple, burning incense as a priest. Gabriel told him that he had good news, that Zechariah’s wife Elizabeth was going to have a son, and this son would be the one God would use to prepare the way for the Lord. Zechariah didn’t believe it. In chapter 1 verse 18, he said, “How shall I know all this? (say what?) For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.” Interesting the way Zechariah describes himself and his wife. He said, “I am old.” SHE is “advanced in years.” It could be translated, “stricken with age.” I’m old, but she’s ancient! I mean, when she sneezes, dirt comes out. She’s so old, the candles cost more than the cake. When she was a girl, the Dead Sea was only sick. Ok, you get the picture? So the question is, why did Luke include these four elderly saints in the story of Jesus’ birth? One way of understanding it is to see these four as representatives of the shift from the old covenant to the new. Before John the Baptist, the Word came through the law and the prophets and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. That was the Old. Then John was born to point to the Savior. Then the Savior was born and Simeon and Anna, both devout and godly followers of God and keepers of the Old Covenant, saw Him and gave testimony that the old covenant has been fulfilled and the new covenant has come!
- **The sovereignty of the Spirit**
- Look again at the text, beginning with verse 25. You see in those three verses three truths about the Holy Spirit, and His work. First, the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon. We talked about this in our study of the book of Acts, didn’t we? Since the day of Pentecost, we have known the Spirit of God to be in us (all the time), with us (all the time), and upon us (at times of His choosing). The Spirit was upon Simeon, having set him apart for such a time as this. Second, the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ. It has been said that the shepherds in the field were

taught by angels, but Simeon was taught by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had revealed something to Simeon that would shape the way he lived and died. We have to be careful here, lest we come up with all kinds of crazy notions in our own minds about what the Holy Spirit is revealing to us. But the good news is that the Spirit is with us and in us to reveal Christ to us: "...He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26). Third, the Holy Spirit led Simeon into the temple at just the right time, at the same time that Joseph and Mary were bringing Jesus into the temple. This is the most exciting thing to me about the Holy Spirit. He will not let me miss out on what God has for me. As I pondered that spiritual truth this week, I couldn't help but think about one of the most recent addictions that has been discovered the past few years. Have you heard about FOMO? It used to be kind of a joke, "Fear of Missing Out." Now it is seen as a real and growing addiction. Listen to this blurb from John Grohol in his article on the subject: "Teens and adults text while driving, because the possibility of a social connection is more important than their own lives (and the lives of others). They interrupt one call to take another, even when they don't know who's on the other line (but to be honest, we've been doing this for years before caller ID). They check their Twitter stream while on a date, because something more interesting or entertaining just *might* be happening." I have a suggestion for all of us. Leave your phones in the car when you are on a date with your wife. (I have just learned this lesson but am glad to pass it on.) If one of you needs a phone, let it be her phone, and make sure it stays in her purse. Here's another suggestion. Leave your phone in your car when you come to church. ("But my phone has the Bible on it!") Ok, let me ask you this. Have you ever checked email during the service? Or your texts. Or Twitter? If you have, then having your Bible on the phone is just a cover for your growing FOMO. Bring your Bible to church. Leave your addiction in the car. Same rule should apply at the dinner table. Or at any time when you are with people. Leave your phone out of the conversation. I read where Todd Wilson got rid of his smart phone because it would save him money AND because it was a growing problem with driving safety and with relationships. I am wondering if I should do the same. I'll keep you posted. But the point is that no Christian should ever have to struggle with FOMO because we have the Spirit of God to lead us. IF, and there is a condition here, IF you are walking in the light, as He is in the light, then you will not miss out on His plan for you. He will lead you to the right spouse at the right time. And the right calling. Simeon's name means "hearing," or "one who obeys," and he lived up to his name. The Spirit led Simeon into the temple, and when Simeon saw the baby Jesus, the Spirit showed Simeon that this was the One he had been waiting for. He took Jesus in his arms and blessed God. Listen, saints. We can trust the Sovereign Spirit of God. If you are waiting for God right now, like Simeon was, that's a great place to be. Listen to G. Campbell Morgan on this:

- "Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given."
- **The mission of the Messiah**
- Simeon takes Jesus in his arms and speaks the prophecies of old. Isaiah 52:10 says, "The Lord has bared His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Simeon says, "for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples." All peoples! The glory that is now given to Israel is too great for Israel. To use a phrase from John Piper, "it over-swells the banks of Israel and brings revelation to all the nations." Look at Isaiah 42:6b where God speaks about His Son: "I will give You as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations." And then Isaiah 49:6, "It is too light a thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make You as a light for the nations, that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Do you see that? God says that it would be much too light of a thing just to ask His Son to save Israel. He gives Him the salvation of the whole world. Isaiah said it. Now Simeon speaks it to the Savior Himself as he holds Jesus in his arms. The One who came as "a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to (His) people Israel." Even Mary and Joseph marveled at what Simeon said about Jesus (verse 33). I had to

go back and read again what Gabriel had said to Mary and to Joseph and what the shepherds came and told them. This may have been the first time that they had heard that their Son would not only rule on the throne of David, as the angel had said, but would bring salvation to the Gentiles as well!

Let me close by asking this. What would you have if when you were holding it in your hands you were able to say, "This is it! My life is complete. I have everything I need." What would it be? For Simeon, it was Jesus.