

Luke 2:25-35
Simeon's Song of Praise

I don't often take breaks from my normal preaching schedule

- I feel that it would be counter-productive to the momentum that we gain learning from a book

But I typically stop for Christmas

- It is such a wonderful time of the year for us to focus our thoughts

So this Christmas, I want us to focus on a portion of the Gospel of Luke

- Specifically, the Song of Simeon found in Luke 2

In 2006, we took a look at Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55

- This is a tremendous tribute of praise to God
- She extols God as her Savior, the Mighty One, the Faithful One, and the Helper of Israel

In 2007, we took a look at the Benedictus of Zechariah in Luke 1:67-79

- The father of John the Baptist erupts in a burst of praise that God had finally visited His people with salvation, fulfilling many OT prophecies

Last year we also took a look at the angels' appearance to the lowly shepherds in Luke 2:8-20

- The angels spoke of where the God-Man would be born
- And the shepherds found the baby in a manger

This morning, we continue the chronology of the account of Luke

- We are introduced to a man named Simeon

But before we look at this man, we need to understand a little background

By the time of this passage in Luke 2, Jesus has been born

- Mary was conceived even though she was a virgin
- The Biblical Text is very clear that Joseph and Mary had not engaged in sexual union

Luke 2:21 tells us that Jesus was to be circumcised on the 8th day after His birth

- His name was to be called Jesus

As we are told by Dr. Luke, the name Jesus was “**the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb**” (Lk 2:21)

- Gabriel was this angel, as we read in Luke 1:31

According to the Old Testament, a woman who gave childbirth was considered unclean for a certain number of days

- After childbirth, the mother's discharge would disqualify her from entering the Temple¹

If she gave birth to a son, here is the chronology

- She was unclean for 7 days
- The son would be circumcised on the 8th day
- The mother would unclean for an additional 33 days
- This is a total of 40 days of uncleanness

¹ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Luke*, 163.

If she gave birth to a daughter, here is the chronology

- She was unclean for 14 days
- The mother would unclean for an additional 66 days
- This is a total of 80 days of uncleanness

So Mary waited the 40 days after Jesus' birth before she brought him to the Temple

- She was obedient to the Law

After this time period of uncleanness had passed, the woman was to present her first-born to the Lord

- This takes us back to Passover, when the death angel passed over the house of the Jews while killing the firstborn in every Egyptian home

Listen to the words of Numbers 3:13, "For all the first-born are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the first-born in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be Mine; I am the LORD."

But the mother could redeem her child back from the Lord

- Verse 24 tells us that Joseph and Mary brought two turtledoves or pigeons

If you go back and read the Old Testament, God made allowance for the redemption sacrifice

- A lamb was to be sacrificed
- But if the family was poor, then two birds – turtledoves or pigeons – could be offered (Lev 12:8)

The fact that Joseph and Mary didn't offer a lamb tells us that they were poor

- They couldn't afford a lamb

But isn't it fascinating to consider that Mary did have a Lamb

- Her baby would one day be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

So the account in Luke is not only of Mary's purification

- It is also of the presentation of the Child²

Isn't it interesting that God would place before the eyes of the Jews the uncleanness of a woman after birth?

- The entire ritual was designed to show the Jews the physical uncleanness of mankind³

What the Jews should have realized is the need for Divine grace

- But they went through the motions of this purification without really examining their spiritual needs

If a mother and child were clean and pure, there would be no need for purification

- But because mankind is corrupted, God instituted this reminder of uncleanness

We notice that even Jesus' mother had to go through this rite

- Jesus was sinless; however, Mary was still in need of cleansing

With the birth of every child, original sin was passed on to the next generation

- The only exception was the birth of Jesus

² Hendriksen, 163.

³ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 139.

With this background in mind, we are now ready to take a look at Simeon

Let's read Luke 2:25-35

This passage reveals five (5) bits of information about his man that will help us to celebrate Christmas with greater meaning and zeal

- His character (2:25)
- His confidence (2:26)
- His conduct (2:27-28)
- His commendation (2:29-32)
- His counsel (2:33-35)

I. Simeon's character (2:25)

25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon;

Luke introduces us to Simeon in a modest, conservative manner

- Simeon is simply referred to as “a man in Jerusalem”

We are not told a lot about Simeon

- We don't know his parents
- We don't know his station in life
- We don't know where he lived

It doesn't seem that he was a priest or religious leader

- Otherwise, Luke probably would have used his title to introduce him

The amazing thing is that he was simply “a man”

- An ordinary, common man

During 2008, the Saturday morning men's Bible study has been focusing on a book entitled, Twelve Ordinary Men

- It is a book on the 12 apostles

One of the recurring themes of this book is that Christ chose ordinary, common men to serve as the apostles

- No religious teachers
- No super-intelligent individuals

On the contrary, Christ chose ordinary men

- Fishermen
- A tax collector
- Other common jobs of the day

God chooses to use ordinary men so that He may receive the glory, honor, praise, and credit

- We shouldn't look for the glory

And so it is with Simeon

- He is simply “a man”

and this man was righteous and devout.

We are told a little bit about Simeon's character

- "this man was righteous and devout"

To be "righteous" is to depend fully upon the Lord in order to be forgiven and have a right standing with Him

- It is to reject any personal righteousness from keeping the Law or personal morality

Even though Simeon was still living under the Old Covenant, he realized that his sinfulness was a major obstacle

- He had no personal righteousness of his own
- He was a sinner in need of God's grace

Not only was he "righteous," but he was also "devout"

- The word has the overtone of cautious or fearful

Most likely, this word refers to the fact that Simeon was a man who feared God

- Proverbs tells us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction"

Simeon was no fool

- He was a believer who had found righteousness in the Lord and had a profound sense of reverence and respect for his Lord

looking for the consolation of Israel:

The spiritual situation of Jerusalem during this time of the world was pretty sad⁴

- The religious leaders were merely hollow, focusing on external conformity even though they themselves were oftentimes devoid of spiritual life
- The nation had lost their political independence, living under cruel Herod
- There had been 400 years of prophetic silence during which God had not spoken

But despite this abysmal spiritual climate, there were a few who continued to look and long for the Messiah

- You could call these people "the remnant"

They were the few who continued to count on God's promises to send a Deliverer

- The One who would come and crush the head of the serpent, according to Genesis 3:15

Specifically, we are told that Simeon was "looking for the consolation of Israel"

- This was no occasional desire of Simeon's heart
- This was the ongoing, habitual passion of his life

The Old Testament has many prophecies about the coming Messiah

- Those whose trust was in the Lord knew about these prophecies and longed for the day when God would visit His people

⁴ Hendriksen, 165.

We are told that Simeon was looking for “**the consolation of Israel**”

- This is a word that literally means “to call to one’s side”
- The word came to mean comfort or encouragement

What a picture of the salvation that God would provide!

- He would not merely achieve salvation from a distance
- God Himself would visit this Earth, coming alongside humanity!

Dear friend, this is what we as Christians celebrate during the Christmas season!

- Jesus Christ came to this Earth in the Incarnation, coming alongside sinful mankind
- Immanuel – God with us!

Simeon – and many others of the remnant – anxiously longed for this day

- And God allowed Simeon to see its fulfillment

and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Even though Simeon was an ordinary man, he was a righteous and devout man

- He eagerly anticipated the time when God would visit His people

Furthermore, Luke tells us that “**the Holy Spirit was upon him**”

- This man’s life was characterized and controlled by the Person and work of the Holy Spirit

Under the Old Covenant, the Holy Spirit was not permanently indwell a believer

- The Holy Spirit would empower a person for a brief time, but not forever

One of the radical changes that took place at Pentecost was that the Holy Spirit’s ministry was one of permanent indwelling

- Since the birth of the Church, the Holy Spirit has indwelled every believer

Simeon was a man whose life was directed and dominated by the Holy Spirit

- He was not walking in the power of his own abilities, intellect, and desires
- He was a man who lived under the influence of the Holy Spirit

It isn’t obvious in the English text, but the Greek verb indicates a continuous process of having the Holy Spirit upon his life

- Having the Holy Spirit’s presence was a customary, constant reality in the life of Simeon

We have taken a brief look at Simeon’s character in verse 25

II. Simeon’s confidence (2:26)

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.

As a man living under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, Simeon’s life was under the control and influence of God

Here in verse 26, we are told that he was promised by God Himself that he would not see death until he saw the Christ!

- Isn't this amazing to consider?

Can you imagine God telling you, "You won't die until you see the Rapture of the Church"?

- You don't know the exact time when the Rapture will take place
- But you know that it is one of the next big events in God's prophetic timetable

No matter where you went, you were assured that you would not die until you saw the Rapture

But Simeon was told that he would not see death until "he had seen the Lord's Christ"

- What an interesting way to refer to the Messiah!

This was not a pretender or impostor

- This was the very Messiah Who had been promised for many, many years!

And Simeon was promised that he would not die until he had seen this Messiah

- What a privilege!

Simeon relied heavily upon God's Word

- He believed God's Word without doubting

How about us?

- Do we believe God's Word?
- Do we really believe what is revealed to us in the pages of Scripture?

Let's learn from Simeon

- Let's trust God's Word

Thus far, we have examined

- Simeon's character
- Simeon's confidence

III. Simeon's conduct (2:27-28)

27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple;

This is the third consecutive verse that the Holy Spirit is mentioned

- All three are in reference to how Simeon was directed, guided, and influenced by the Third Person of the Trinity

As Simeon entered the Temple, Luke is careful to tell us that he was "in the Spirit"

- He was not there by accident
- He was there by sovereign direction and planning

Think of the timing that had to be just right

- Not just any day, but the right day
- Not just any time, but the right time

That day, Simeon's hopes would be realized

- He would have the privilege of seeing the Messiah

and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,

As Simeon entered the Temple, Joseph and Mary also entered

- They were bringing Jesus into the Temple for the first time
- But this certainly was not the last time that Jesus would enter the Temple!

Luke brings attention to the obedient nature of Joseph and Mary

- We are told that they obeyed in carrying out "the custom of the Law"

Joseph and Mary were righteous individuals who desired to comply with God's written revelation

28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

At some point, Simeon saw Jesus

- Perhaps he heard Joseph and Mary mention His name
- Perhaps the Holy Spirit sovereignly directed him to Jesus

Regardless, this must have been a highly emotional scene

- Simeon had waited and eagerly anticipated the coming of the Messiah
- Now Simeon was about to hold the Messiah in his arms

The Text informs us that Simeon "took Him into his arms"

- The word used denotes the bent nature of one's arms⁵

Everyone knows the proper manner for holding a baby

- The baby is nestled in the bent of one's arm, opposite the elbow
- This provides support for the baby's head

Here is Simeon cradling and supporting the Messiah

- Simeon was holding the God-Man in his arms!

Overwhelmed with emotion and joy, Simeon "blessed God"

- The word is the basis for our English term *eulogy*

Simeon is about to speak forth his Nunc dimittis

- His praise for the Messiah
- The Song of Simeon

It should be a constant amazement that the God-Man didn't start His earthly life as an adult

- He didn't come to this Earth and immediately begin His Messianic ministry

No, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit inside the womb of Mary, a virgin

- He was born as a baby
- He grew up just like any other child, except that He was sinless!

⁵ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol II, 28.*

This is the Christmas message

- The Messiah has been born!

Let's listen to see what Simeon says about this God-Man

IV. Simeon's commendation (2:29-32)

29 "Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart in peace, according to Thy word:

In our English versions, the title of "Lord" is placed first

- But that isn't the order of the Greek text

The order of the original language is, "Now set free Your servant, Lord"

- The emphasis, in the mind of Simeon, is on his being "set free," obviously a reference to his death

We aren't told how old Simeon was at this time of his life

- It really doesn't matter

But Simeon is described as a righteous, devout man whose life is controlled, directed, guided, and influenced by the Holy Spirit

- He was sovereignly directed to enter the Temple to meet the Messiah

We also have to keep in mind that Simeon was promised that he would not see death until he saw the Lord's Christ

- Now he is looking at the Lord's Christ, face-to-face

What is the first thing on Simeon's mind?

- "Now I can die, Lord...I have seen Your Christ!"

Simeon acknowledges that God has acted "according to Thy word"

- God has been faithful to keep His promise, the promise that he would not die until he saw the Messiah

Now Simeon can die "in peace"

- No regrets
- Only rejoicing!

Notice lastly how Simeon refers to himself, "Thy bond-servant"

- It is the term for a slave or servant

Whatever position or status Simeon had on this Earth – which we aren't told – he refers to himself as God's servant

- What a lowly, godly perspective to have!

Is this the way that you think of yourself?

- Do you think of yourself as a lowly servant?
- Or do you think of yourself in more dignified terms?

Your perspective of yourself will reflect how you live your life

- And also how you treat others

30 For my eyes have seen Thy salvation.

In verse 30, Simeon's song of praise continues

- He says, "**my eyes have seen Thy salvation**"

Simeon never refers to Jesus as "Christ" or "Messiah"

- He uses the term "Lord" which could be translated, "Master"

Here in verse 30, Simeon acknowledges that he has seen God's "**salvation**"

- This is what the spiritual remnant desired and needed

To see Jesus is to see the very embodiment of salvation⁶

- He is called Savior!

Jesus didn't merely come to the Earth to be a good Example

- Even though He was the best Example

Jesus didn't merely come to the Earth to be a good Person

- Even though He was the best Person ever to live

Jesus came to this Earth to be the Savior

- To rescue sinful humanity from the power and penalty of sin

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and said to him, "**And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins**" (Mt 1:21)

- This is the mission of the Messiah!

Some Jews mistakenly expected the Messiah to overthrow the Roman government

- This is more of a political salvation

But Jesus' mission was one of spiritual salvation

- To rescue those who were enslaved to sin

31 Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples.

Undoubtedly, Simeon knew the Old Testament well

- This was the basis for his strong Messianic hope and expectation

Simeon acknowledges that God had prepared salvation "**in the presence of all peoples**"

- Not just the Jews
- But "**all peoples**"

Even in the Old Testament, we see that God doesn't limit His grace and kindness only to the Jews

- The book of Jonah should remind us of this
- God spared the pagan Ninevites from judgment

⁶ Walter L. Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Luke*, 849.

The book of Revelation tells us of the song of the 24 elders and the four living creatures, “Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” (Rev 5:9)

- Jesus purchased men “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation”

32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES.

Here in verse 32, Simeon makes a distinction between Gentiles and Jews

- For the Gentiles, Jesus was “a light of revelation”
- For the Jews, Jesus was “the glory of Thy people Israel”

Gentiles were not given the Old Testament Scriptures

- They were viewed as outsiders and foreigners

Frequently in the Bible, the Gentiles are described as living in spiritual darkness

- The passage from Isaiah 9 read earlier reminded us, “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them” (Isa 9:2)

In the book of Ephesians, Paul describes Gentiles this way, “remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (2:12)

The fact that the opening words of verse 32 are in all capital letters tells us that Simeon is quoting an Old Testament verse

- Once again, a sign that he knew the Old Testament well

The Jews were called to be missionaries and evangelists to the surrounding nations

- They were called to proclaim what God had instructed to them

Instead, the Jews became inwardly focused and stayed away from the Gentiles

- Thus, they cut themselves off from their mission field!

Jesus was born a Jew

- He would be “A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES”

Jesus was called a friend of sinners

- He oftentimes spent time with the outcasts of society

And the glory of Thy people Israel.”

Regarding His own people, Jesus was “the glory of Thy people Israel”

The mention of “glory” should draw your minds back to the Old Testament

- The presence of God was manifested to the Jews in the Tabernacle and Temple
- Gentiles were not allowed inside certain areas

God has shown His glory to His people, the Jews

- Now Jesus was the physical manifestation of God’s glory

Listen to John 1:14, “**And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.**”

- The glory of God was in human flesh!

V. Simeon’s counsel (2:33-35)

33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

These closing verses are a bit of reality check for Mary

- Thus far, she has heard marvelous words from the angel Gabriel and now from Simeon

Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary “**were amazed at the things which were being said about Him**”

- They couldn’t believe their ears!

But Jesus would not live a life of easy and pleasure

- He would be mistreated, misunderstood, and ultimately crucified

Mothers, I don’t have to tell you that if you knew that your son would experience such mistreatment and abuse, you would be devastated

- Mary needed to be warned

34 And Simeon blessed them.

In verse 28, Simeon “**blessed God**”

- Here in verse 34, Simeon “**blessed them (Joseph and Mary)**”

God has chosen Joseph and Mary to be the earthly parents for Jesus

- This was a unique and high privilege

But neither Joseph nor Mary should be praised

- Neither one should be worshiped

The only One worthy of worship is the baby Jesus!

- Isn’t that astounding?

and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—

Simeon then turns his attention directly toward Mary

- His words are sobering as they tell of the impact that baby Jesus will have on the lives of many in Israel and throughout the entire world

According to Simeon, Jesus “**is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel**”

- How people respond to Jesus would determine whether they “**fall**” or “**rise**”

If you reject Jesus as the Messiah, you will “**fall**”

- They would be excluded from the joy of heaven and be crushed with the weight of God’s wrath and fury over sin

If you embrace Jesus as the Messiah, you will “rise”

- They would be assured of eternity with Christ in heaven

A.T. Robertson puts it this way, “Jesus is the magnet of the ages. He draws some, he repels others”⁷

- Jesus really is the dividing issue of history

35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul—

For Mary specifically, Simeon utters some chilling words, “a sword will pierce even your own soul”

There were two different words for “sword” in the Greek language

- One was a short dagger, used for hand-to-hand combat
 - o It was used in situations that demanded precision and accuracy
- The other sword was a large, broad sword, used to inflict heavy damage to the opponent
 - o It wasn’t used for precision; it was used of raw power

Mary would feel the power of a broad sword entering into her own soul

- The loss would be devastating

But what could Simeon possibly be thinking of?

- When would a sword enter into her own soul?

While Jesus was on the cross, His mother Mary was there

- She watched Him agonize in pain
- She watched Him be ridiculed, mocked, and humiliated

Mothers, wouldn’t it pierce your soul to see your child go through a time like this?

- This is why Simeon described the pain as comparable to a broad sword entering Mary’s own soul

to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

A person’s attitude and response toward Jesus would reveal the true intent of his/her heart

- A person is either “for” or “against” Him
- There can be no middle ground

Christ Himself said, “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Lk 11:23)

- Those are strong words to consider this morning
- Especially if you are here as an unbeliever

The Christmas season is about the birth of our Savior

- To redeem sinners from the bondage of sin

For those of you who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, my prayer for you is simple

- That you would come to adore and praise Jesus, just as Simeon has modeled for us this morning

⁷ Robertson, 29.

Simeon longed to see the Lord's Christ

- When he did see Him, Simeon said, "My eyes have seen Thy salvation"

Have you come to a point in your life when you understand your need of salvation?

- I pray that you do
- I pray that you will respond to His call on your life this morning

For those of you who have a personal relationship with Christ, I pray that you have a wonderful, Merry Christmas this week

- Let me explain what I mean

I don't pray that you would have lots of presents to open

- The excitement and pleasure of opening gifts will last only a short time
- The toys will break, the electronics will lose their luster, and clothes will wear out

I do pray that you will take some time to relish in the birth of Jesus Christ

- Remember what your life would be without Christ
- Remind yourself of what God has done in your life
- Realize that all praise and credit belong to Jesus Christ

Let's celebrate and worship Jesus Christ

- The God-Man who came to visit His people in salvation
 - o Forgiveness of sins
 - o Transformation of our nature
 - o Taking the wrath of God in our place