

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."”

"A Just & Devout Servant"

Since Simeon is one of my favorite characters in the Christmas accounts it is a blessing to once again focus on his faith in this New Year: Here at Church of the King we have used the simple and yet profound 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 21st Century.

As we have discussed, it is Matthew and Luke who give us many details about the birth of Jesus and it is from Luke's account that we know 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: *[It seems we always go back to the Book of Beginnings!]* The institution of circumcision comes as God renews His covenant with Abram & gives him the name Abraham:

Genesis 17:4b **“"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. ... 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, ... 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."**

- To understand why God put such importance in circumcision we must consider events long before and long after this encounter with Abraham.

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 seriousness 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, but rather our covenant children are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son & 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!**
- **In the Old Testament times there was a bloody sign that looked forward to the sacrifice of Jesus.**
- **In the New Testament we are given a cleansing sign that reminds us that our sins have been washed away with the blood of Jesus shed on that cross outside of Jerusalem.**

After another month the baby Jesus was brought to the Temple 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 was yet 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 find in Simeon's prayer:

- **Simeon had great hope**
- **Simeon had contentment**
- **Simeon had a vision of the future**

These are the lessons that this just and devout man can teach us and our church in the hustle & bustle of our modern age.

Hope, contentment and vision: These 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 some of his hope fulfilled as he is allowed to hold the baby Jesus, but also has a continued hope knowing that this baby is the promised Messiah who will bring light to the Gentiles.

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!

- It is also with great hope that we are sent forth with the Great Commission each week, believing that the Kingdom of Jesus will fill the earth!

Next we see that 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.... 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.'”

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 abortion 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.

- The life of Simeon is an example that stands in stark contrast with the example of those religious and political leaders of that day.

If we are not willing to follow an example like Simeon then I fear we are just “playing church” and 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...

Each of us has been made in the image of God AND as unique individuals! We are NOT to be envious of others or covet what we have not been given. 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:

Content with who is in our family and again not coveting what others may have in theirs. Loving those God has placed in our families no matter how difficult this may be at times! Believing that God’s great promise of salvation is unto us and our children!

- And so I am not misunderstood, love here includes proper discipline whether it is the rod in the home, the sword of the civil magistrate or the keys given to the Church.

Young people should believe 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.
- Even when we go through struggles, as we did last year, we must rest in the fact that God is in control and that all the promises given to the Church will come to pass in history.

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! We discussed a few weeks ago how this is done with one faithful step at a time, but we should remember P.J. O’Rourke quote when he said, ‘everyone wants to conquer the world, but no one wants to wash the dishes!’

- It is easy to simply say that God will save the world!
- What is tougher is stepping up to be the one who washes the dirty dishes: AND to be content while doing them!

So, if we want to live the “just and devout” life that Simeon gives us an example of we should heed the encouragement to meditate on the Book of Proverbs where we learn that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord... We have the reading of Proverbs the calendar for January and the wisdom from Proverbs chapter four reminds us 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.”

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, as families and as a church...

Truly must commit anew to study these Books of Wisdom, remembering those encouraging words of Deuteronomy 31:8:

"Jehovah Himself goes before you and will be with you! He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid--do not be discouraged." –

That verse inspired Arthur Pink’s, "New Year's Comfort" in 1943, which Pastor Roe shared this week. His message came at a time when the world was at war, and yet it still rings very true for us as we approach the year of our Lord 2018 striving to be a people of great hope contentment & vision:

“As we launch out into another year, there is little visible prospect of a smooth and pleasant voyage. To the natural eye, the clouds are dark and fierce storms seem imminent. The very uncertainty of what the morrow may bring forth, fills many with uneasiness and trepidation. But how different should be the state of God's children! An all-sufficient Object is presented to the eyes of their faith, from which unbelief derives no comfort. The poor worldling is concerned with what lies before him--but it is the blessed privilege of the believer to be occupied with Who goes before him--the One who is his Captain, his Guide, his Forerunner. "The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you!" What a difference that makes! O that writer and reader may be enabled to lay hold of this grand Truth as we enter another period of time, and keep it steadily in mind throughout the coming days!

Communion Meditation: Isaiah 43:1-3

“"Do not be afraid--for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name--you are Mine! When you go through deep waters--I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty--you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression--you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am Jehovah, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!"”