

Luke 2: “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.”

The Faith of Simeon

Those who know me are not surprised to see a sermon on Simeon, who is one of my favorite characters in the Christmas accounts, and certainly one of the most important.

- **Each week here at Church we have used his simple prayer & the Gloria Patri as the closing hymn when we are commissioned and sent forth to serve our living and reigning Savior!**

Luke, in his orderly account of the life and work of Jesus, provides some important details about the early life of Jesus: He gives us the details of His circumcision where Jesus is placed in the membership of God's covenant people. He then discusses the temple purification rites for Jesus and His Mother Mary and includes Simeon's warning to Mary about her coming pain as her Son is crucified for our sin: All of which remind us of the reality of the fall and utter corruption of mankind and why we need the Savior.

For today I want to simply focus on the prayer that Simeon lifted up there at the Temple as we seek to serve the Lord of Glory in the Year of our Lord 2024.

Luke introduces Simeon, as a “just & devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel.”

- **One who is waiting for the promised Messiah!**
- **A faithful Saint who follows the leading of the Holy Spirit.**
- **We should see his faith and life as examples to follow today!**

When Simeon sees the baby Jesus, Luke tells us that he, “took Him up in his arms and blessed God.” Simeon's actions and the prayer that he lifted up teach us that:

- **He had hope.**
- **He had contentment.**
- **He had a vision for the future.**

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

- **Three lessons about three things that the world 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!**

[something Pastor Liberati has focused on in his messages these past few weeks]

- We see Simeon's contentment as he 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"

- Simeon sees his hope fulfilled as he is allowed to hold the baby Jesus, knowing that He is the promised Messiah.

Simeon knows that God has promised to conquer all the nations though that would have been difficult for him to imagine at that point in history! But he trusts the promises of God and knows that God will accomplish His goals, even if he could not understand how all the details would be worked out!

- Today, we also need to be content with where God has placed us, trusting God's promises that the Kingdom of Jesus will fill all the earth, even if we still cannot imagine all the details!

Finally, Simeon articulates 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."**

The theme of Jesus being the Light of the World runs deep and must be understood, by us as it was by Simeon. The word light is used over three hundred times in most Bibles and you will find sixteen of them in John's Gospel account where we read at John 8:12"

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." And again at John 12:46"

"I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness."

- A fruitful homework assignment for this week could be to read through the Book of John looking for all the occurrences & uses of the word light!
- 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.

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]*

Yes, God will save the world, we just need to remember do our part in God's grand plan for the world, with a smile on our face!

- And what a GREAT plan of salvation God is carrying out!
- A plan, as Pastor Liberati pointed out, that began with the troubling of King Herod & all of Jerusalem!

The Jews did expect a great salvation, but they saw it as one focused only on them, with no interest in just washing some dishes!

- They believed that God would show the world His great salvation by having the Jews rise up with a new King David and throw off the evil shackles of Rome and the rest of the wicked world!

- Sadly we have many in the Church today who have just moved that kind of plan into the future after some sort of rapture.

No need to wash dishes or plan for the future because Jesus is coming back real soon: This is not what God had planned nor what Simeon rightly understood from the Scriptures...

Simeon prays about Jesus being the light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

- The Old Testament made it clear that the nation of Israel was to minister God's great salvation to the seventy nations of the world.
- The final chapters of Isaiah speak about Jesus being a light to the Gentiles!

The Jews had become proud and forgotten all of this, hating the very people they were intended to minister to.

God's great plan of salvation was to bring together Jew and Gentile, tearing down that wall of separation! A great example for our day, but sadly many today who want create divisions and to erect more walls.

In God's plan, the walls of hatred and division that fallen man has erected would be torn down:

- Wall between Men & woman;
- Walls between Young & old;
- Walls between Rich & poor;
- Even walls between Slave & free...

- And we can find examples of these being torn down throughout the New Testament and all of Church history.

As we go forth each week with this prayer of Simeon on our lips we must always remember how much easier it is for US to believe his prayer than it was for faithful Simeon...

- Simeon could only see the salvation of God as through a glass darkly: Understanding as best he could the prophecies given in the Old Testament!

Simeon stands there holding this little six-week-old baby at the Temple:

A Temple where the proud religious leaders now had no use for the Lord's Messiah. In a city ruled by cruel Rome which controlled the then known world...

A world ravaged by the sin of man, with massive slavery, cruelty toward women, infanticide practiced out in the open with Roman fathers deciding if the newborn child would live: Massive ignorance with no education for most, no hospitals, AND no dentists!

A world plunged into darkness as the prophets had foretold where Satan had held sway over the nations deceiving them as only he could.

Now this little baby comes as the light of the world: THE Light that would bring forth the new heavens and the new earth, establishing His Kingdom, a Kingdom that would fill the earth.

- And here is faithful Simeon, proclaiming all that God has promised in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

So, how much easier should it be for US to believe in the advance of God's Kingdom today?

Jesus is no longer a baby held by Simeon among a few faithful Jews...

- **Jesus is now reigning as the King of Kings & billions of Saints have put their trust in Him over the past two thousand years!**

Satan has been bound so he can no longer deceive the nations...

- **And nation after nation has come to Christ to a lesser or greater extent walking in His light.**

Today, the most powerful country in the world is not pagan Rome, but a county founded by Christians! Now the revealed Word of God is not confined to just the Old Testament in a few scrolls kept safe in Israel.

- **We have the completed cannon with the entire account of the life of Jesus the Book of Acts to show us how the Spirit of God will fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus, all the Epistles to teach us how to live in this new age.**
- **God's complete Word is now available in almost any language and can be communicated at light speed around the world via the Internet.**

And we must remember as we send it around the world that we must take time to put it in our lives every day! This is why we encourage further study with our weekly readings from the Heidelberg, or even taking the order of worship home for review.

We have a monthly church calendar to encourage us to pray one for another along with suggested readings from Psalms & Proverbs.

- **If you follow along in the month January you will learn a great deal about when & where to wash those dishes!**

I share all of this to remind us that we no longer have to wonder what God will do through a little baby held in our arms...

- **We can study almost two-thousand years of church history and see what Jesus has done!**

We have great universities that were started by Christians along with hospitals and healthcare advances that daily fulfill the promise of Jesus that His disciples would do miracles like His and even more.

I could go on and on, but I hope you see the vision and conviction with which we should sing this simple prayer of Simeon's today and as we depart each week...

- **A prayer that we are to believe with simple faith.**
- **A prayer that we are to act upon with simple steps of service throughout the week.**
- **And a prayer that should always bring us back to God's truth to make sure we stay the course with the right vision!**
- **This is why we must pray for each other, to the end that our Savior Jesus Christ might be manifested as the light of the world!**

John says of Jesus, the Word made flesh, that “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men,” and then he goes on to proclaim that “11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

- **That is the simple Gospel:
Jesus, the Light that will lighten the Gentiles and that is who and what we are here to proclaim!**
- **Wise counsel for a New Year and the rest of our lives!**

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.”