

V. Advent in Biblical Perspective  
*From No News to Good News*  
“Come and Behold Him?”  
Luke 2:22-40  
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December 25, 2022 • Sunday Morning Sermon

Our text begins after Jesus has been born and it's eight days later. Luke 2:21 says [21] *And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I love Christmas and Easter, except for lilies and poinsettias. I love the Advent season and I love the challenge of how to come afresh to the Advent text after preaching for 40 plus years. I have to confess, this year, when the Lord just laid upon my heart, that the blank page between the Old Testament and New Testament is 400 years of God's declared silence. After His 400 years of silence, we now have four Gospels – the Good News. Now we go from no news to good news. He has already told what's going to happen in those 400 years of silence from the Prophets that preceded those years – in Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, and Daniel. God in the former days spoke about His Son through the Prophets and the angels and in the latter days, He has finally spoken in His Son, the Redeemer and Savior of sinners.

As the silence is broken, He breaks it just a little bit at a time, like the cracking of ice, perhaps. He speaks arguably, seven times in the birth narratives about Jesus through angelic messengers from the throne room. The first one we saw was the message to Zechariah and Elizabeth through the angel Gabriel, where the first thing that is said by God is ‘I'm about to fulfill the last thing you find in the Old Testament, in Malachi, before the coming of the Messiah, I'll send one a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah, who will turn the hearts of the fathers of the faith to the children, the children of God.’ Now, does that have implication for homes? Yes, but it's speaking of the family of God for this prophet is going to turn their leaders and fathers of the faith to the children to care for them. It's not about us. It's about what God's doing in their life and then the children with greater confidence begin to look to the God of glory and grace because of what the Father is doing through these fathers. That is John the Baptist.

That is then followed by the Angel Gabriel leaving the temple in Jerusalem and now going up to speak to Mary, telling her, ‘Don't fear what I'm about to say. God will sustain you. He'll be with you.’ She surrenders to the message that she is the identified, the appointed one who will be used of the Lord to bring forth the Virgin conception and will be kept a virgin to give birth to this Savior.

An angel now speaks to Joseph, and he tells him, ‘Don't fear what you're called to do. There's the appointed mother. The Virgin conceives. You're the adopted father.’ Some people say he's a stepfather. I think you can argue that I just prefer to see it as Joseph being the adopted father. Both Joseph and Mary come through that forgotten, glorious line of kings. They are the heirs of the throne of David. Now God is bringing in fulfillment the King that was promised to take the throne of David, a Son of David, and will come through Joseph and Mary.

Then the Angel moves to speak to the shepherds in the field and as they come to the manger, 'you'll find him wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger' which is a stone cattle trough. Many sermons focus on that there was no place for them in the in which was a guest room of the home that they came to. It's not so much a tavern inn type thing or a hotel. There's a Greek word that's used there that means it's a guest room and said the guest room was full. With everybody coming for the registration it's not surprising there is no room but the only thing they have is underneath the house, the cave, the stable, and they can go there. That's where Jesus is. Because He was the King of Kings He could have been born in a palace but no, the lowly shepherds can walk over with no appointment, no screening, no scanning. They find Him there in the trough wrapped in swaddling cloths, accessible to all that we bring to Him.

You can come to Him. The accessible Jesus on that day that they could walk right up to praising Him and surrendering to Him, and you can come to Him today, right now, this day as one of the sons of Earth be raised to a new birth, to be born again. He is accessible to you today for you to surrender to Him and praise Him. We see how the angel worked in the shepherds and the angel is not through yet for there is more ministry to go.

The angel will come and warn Joseph to take the Baby down to Egypt because of Herod's treachery. After Herod's dead, the angel comes and sends them back up to the hill country of Judea and then the angel, then sends them over to Nazareth, because again, the Scriptures are being fulfilled. We've looked at four of those angelic ministries, and now we come to a final study in our Advent series of no news too good news by looking at an event that takes place.

Luke has done his research and has come up with this narrative that he gives to us of what happened in the days of the birth of Jesus that Matthew doesn't cover but Matthew's account accommodates it and gives us some insight. Matthew 1 and 2 and Luke 1 and 2 give us the birth narratives. This year as never before, I have loved the study of this, working through the chronology, the implications, and the applications of all that is happening and I want to end by summarizing that for you from this last birth narrative. Luke is not through dealing with the childhood of Jesus, because we're going to we're going to have some more at the end of Luke 2 but this is the end of the birth narratives that we have in Matthew 1 and then Luke 1 and 2.

In this series we started with the angel coming to Zechariah in the temple in Jerusalem with he and Elizabeth aged and advanced in years. We will end back in the temple at Jerusalem. We will end with two Godly people, Simeon and Anna, both are aged, and advanced in years. In between the youthful Mary and perhaps a little bit older, Joseph. We have this entire spectrum of humanity that shows up in these birth narratives. Chronologically, it's pretty easy to put it together as you work your way through it.

By the way, we're not through with the temple because Jesus is going to be back here at age 13 and they're going to lose Him. He didn't lose them, they lost Him. Later in Luke 4, He's going to be in the synagogue, as was His custom. In the normal course of this family's life, they were always in church, Mary and Joseph. They were in the church and the church was in their home. We also see in Luke that, as was their custom, they were in the synagogue, and He came for the feast every year of His childhood, up until the point that He is now declared a man at age 13. The gathering of God's people was built into the life of the family of Mary and Joseph and Jesus. Not only that, God's people were in their home, the church was in them, and they were in Christ Church as it is being brought forth in its New Testament glory with Christ, the head and the foundation of the Word of God.

On the 21st day, we know something that happens. Jesus has been born, He's eight days old, and they circumcise Him and name Him as they were directed. Note the obedience. The law of God said that on the eighth day He was to receive the sign and seal of the Covenant. Back then, if you were converted to the Lord God of Glory as an adult, then the male would have to be circumcised. That was this sign of the covenant. It did not save you. We know that. Why? Because Abraham is circumcised in Genesis 17 but he's converted back in Genesis 15, so we know that it doesn't save. We also know that the sign of the covenant, whether it's circumcision or the one that replaces it – baptism – is not the sign of our faith. The sign of the covenant is God's sign to us of His faithfulness that we receive by faith that He will fulfill His promises. Here the covenant sign is placed on the eighth day upon Jesus in obedience to the law.

We don't know what happens in Jesus' life from the eighth day to the 40<sup>th</sup> but Scripture picks up on His 40<sup>th</sup> day in this birth narrative as it unfolds. Let's now get into our text for this study. We will see in Luke's account how everything in the life of Jesus is being directed by the Word of God and Mary and Joseph are fearless and faithful every step of the way. When the time came, they did what they were supposed to do. By no means are they perfect for they are sinners saved by grace but there is much to learn from them. They are people that when they get up in the morning they look at what God's Word says for them to do and then build their life on it. We don't build our life on our feelings. On the 40<sup>th</sup> day they new they would have to take that five mile walk from Bethlehem to Jerusalem for the purification of Mary and the consecration of the firstborn who breaks the womb which is what it calls for them to do in Leviticus 12. Luke gets this point across when he continues to tell us God's Word is directing the steps of their life. Tomorrow morning what is going to direct your footsteps, the world or the Word of God and the Spirit of God Who sent you into the world by the grace of God for the glory of God?

Luke 2:22-24 says [22] *And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord* [23] *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first 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."*

Here they are obeying the law for the firstborn to be consecrated, to be presented. Why? The echo is going back to Egypt – the Passover whereby the death of the firstborn happened, unless the blood was upon the doorpost. From then on God builds the reminder – to have life, you have to be redeemed. So when the firstborn comes forth, you bring them, you consecrate them, you present them and bring the sacrifice of a lamb, because we have no life as sinners under the judgment of God unless there's a substitutionary sacrifice.

There's three events here – circumcision, the Passover replication in the sacrifice of the first born to be consecrated and presented and the purification of Mary, her baptism. She's going to be purified and Jesus is going to be presented and there's supposed to be a call to have a sacrifice of a lamb. Jesus is circumcised. Who is Jesus? He's our Circumcision in obedience to the law, that He might be righteous and raised according to the law. He's born of a woman under the law, and yet the One who is being circumcised with these opening drops of blood will go to the cross and it is there He will cut away, (which is what circumcision means) our sin record and cancel it at the cross. Christ is our circumcision. The One being circumcised is the One who is our circumcision, and the One who is being consecrated is the Lamb. He is the Lamb that will take away our sins.

Here we notice something. Mary and Joseph don't have a lamb but Leviticus 12 for those who are poor makes a concession so instead of a lamb for those who are poor, they can bring these turtle doves. We see this in Luke 2:24. They don't have enough money to afford a lamb, but they take advantage of what the law has provided so they can get the turtle doves or the pigeons.

Here is a bonus. When we watch nativity scenes here come the shepherds and then come the wise man. There's only one problem with this; I don't think Baby Jesus was a little baby Jesus. I understand why we do it the way we do with the nativity scene because we can't wait a couple of years for the wise men to show up after the shepherds because we only have so much time that night. I'm not being negative or critical about that. I know why we do it.

I don't think they walked up while Jesus is in the stable and there are three reasons why I don't believe this is when they saw Him as a baby. I don't know how much later, but I do believe they came later. Number one, whatever they said as to why they were there to see the king and how they got there, Herod to cover his bases in his plan to get rid of the King as he does the work of Satan, who tries to destroy the seed of the woman, as he is creating this genocide, he puts the age limit to two years old and under. So Jesus is somewhere between birth and two years. The second thing is when the wise men, these regal visitors do arrive, bringing regal gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh, gifts fit for a king Matthew says they come to a house to see Him, not a stable. We don't know whose house they were in. The third reason I know they didn't come before the 40th day because Joseph would not poor anymore for they bring Him, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Where we are in Luke 2 at the 40<sup>th</sup> day, with them bringing two turtledoves or pigeons to the temple means they couldn't afford a lamb so the regal visitors had not shown up by the 40th day.

So, we are following the chronology of the events and how they happened as recorded in the Scripture. We are currently at the 40<sup>th</sup> day at the temple. We see three steps of obedience to the law; circumcision – the presentation and consecration with the sacrifice of the firstborn, the reapplication, the redeclaration of the Passover that saved the firstborn and then Mary's baptism and purification, but here's where we really get to it. There in the temple, someone is about to meet them. There is another recipient of Divine revelation. We have no idea how it came to him, but we do know God has spoken to this man. His name is Simeon and then comes something really life changing as we understand it. This man has a reputation of integrity and committed to following Christ, the Lord of glory. It doesn't mean he is perfect.

Luke 2:25 says [25] *Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout (worshipper), waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.*

The phrase 'waiting for the consolation of Israel' is drawing from the prophecy of Isaiah 40. The Messiah will comfort His people and be a consolation. He's a conqueror. He's going to win the victory over his enemies and He is a consoler. Simeon is waiting for the Isaiah prophecy of the Messiah, the consoler or the constellation of Israel who brings not platitudinal comfort, He brings Divine comfort through the Deliverer, who will come to redeem us. Every believer has the Holy Spirit. This is speaking of that special promise that at certain times in ministry and opportunities, the Holy Spirit brings an anointing. This is what I believe the Bible teaches in the anointing of the Spirit for an occasion and an opportunity. Simeon has been prepared by the presence of the Holy Spirit for this moment. He's a recipient of Divine revelation in this breaking of silence.

Luke 2:26 says [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.* Simeon, like the rest of us, doesn't know the date of his death, but he does know he won't die until the Messiah gets here. Would you like to know at least when you won't die? Of course. As soon as the Messiah shows up though he better be ready to check out. Just because he knows when he is not going to die until the Messiah comes to him, it doesn't mean he acts irresponsible. Let's continue in the passage.

Luke 2:27-32 says [27] *And he came in 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] that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, [32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*

I love God's Word. I love God's law for its right use for it exposes, it reveals sin, it shows our sinfulness, and it sends us to Jesus, but I thank God that He was born under the law and He has obeyed it perfectly for us. It is not our obedience to the law that saves us. It is His and it's His sacrifice for us who have disobeyed God's law whereby we're redeemed. Here is the fifth song sung in the narratives of Christ's coming and birth. There is the song of Elizabeth, of Zechariah, of Mary and of the angels in the presence of the shepherds. Now here is the song of Simeon.

There are three words for Lord in the Bible. This is the one used the least. It's the word *despotes*. It's only used about six or seven times and it means the Master, the One who is in complete sovereign control of my life. The coming of this One is the glory of why Israel had been chosen. Through them would come the Redeemer, the glory of Israel. What will this Redeemer do? He'll bring the light of salvation to all the nations, to all the Gentiles. Now, Simeon says, 'I'm ready. Bring me home now, Lord. Dismiss me into Your presence.' Let's continue in the text.

Luke 2:33-35 says [33] *And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. [34] And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed [35] (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."*

In Nazareth will there be people who believe in Him? Yes. Will the town run Him out? Yes. There will be rising and falling in His own home until the resurrection. His brothers and sisters did not believe Him. He is going to mark out those who believe and those who reject. There is no neutrality. There will be the rising and falling of many in Israel. This One that bring salvation is a sign to bring the powers of darkness and rebellion against Him. Can you imagine this word that God speaks through Simeon right now that Mary must have remembered 33 years later, as she stands in front of that cross and a spear goes into the side of her Son? Just think of the sword of pain that goes into her soul and her heart. Salvation is free, but serving the Savior costs and yet He sustains us, which He does with Mary.

There is also another person there, it's Anna. Luke 2:36-38 says [36] *And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, [37] and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. [38] And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

Some translations say Anna was ‘great in years’ and so much for political correctness. I mean, Zechariah was smart by saying his wife was putting on a few years but not Luke. He says Anna is great in years but we find out why. Some translations give a little more clarity to the phrase ‘husband seven years from when she was a virgin’ which means she would have been a teenager yet unmarried with no intimacy. So how old is she? I think she was over 100 years old because I think that 84 is the years of her widowhood in the original. So, she's probably about 15 when she gets married, she's married seven years and widowed for 84 years. That would put her over 100, which would be the kind of language that is being used here of being great in years. We also see her doing worship and evangelism. She gives thanks to God, prays and speaks of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel.

I want to leave you with some couplets from our Advent series. The first one is infallibility and inerrancy. In the last study we looked at the seven moves of Joseph before Jesus was four years old. Every move was out of obedience to God's Word and when God directed him with God's Word. He wasn't a vagabond; he was a pilgrim. Secondly, every move he made fulfilled a prophecy hundreds of years before. God's Word will not fail. The birth narratives recorded in Matthew and Luke point out 12 prophecies fulfilled in the events we've been going through in this series.

A second couplet is God uses male and female. By the way, Creation says there are males and females. It's not the doctor that declares it. It's God that creates male and female in His image and when God works in man made in His image, male and female, He gives male and female His Spirit, gifts and calling as we have seen in Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph and now Simeon and Anna. He saves men and women, gifts men and women, and calls men and women. He uses us the way He has created us and through the redemption that He has provided for us.

The third couplet is God uses old and young. Let's build a culture that appreciates God's blessing upon the aged and rejoices in the opportunities for the young. Let's not get an idolatry of youth nor let's not dismiss our grandparents in their wisdom. We saw God use those advanced in years – Zechariah and Elizabeth, Anna and Simeon – and those who were young – Mary and Joseph. He also used robust shepherds and robust traveling, regal ambassadors. Praise God for that diversity I see here, and I pray it would grow here.

The fourth couplet is God used Jew and Gentile. The visitors from the East were Gentiles and the shepherds were Jews for the glory of Israel is a light to the nations.

The fifth couplet is the sovereignty of God and responsibility of man. The sovereignty of God – you're not going to die till you see the Messiah. We don't see Simeon then signing up for stupid adventures because he isn't going to die till then. No, the sovereignty of God doesn't lead to a doctrine of fatalism. It is something whereby we make responsible decisions in the Spirit of God of how to fulfill God's Word, knowing that God's Word is for everlasting and God is sovereignly at work in our life. We see the sovereignty of God in fulfillment after fulfillment of prophecy.

Why is there a Quirinius as governor, because he worked for Rome. Why do you have a Rome? It is because Daniel said that Assyria would be followed by Babylon and Babylon by the Medo-Persians and the Medo-Persians by the Greeks and the Greeks, by the Romans. And 57 years before this, the Romans had come in and now it's time for a registration and Jesus gets to Bethlehem to fulfill the very Word of God that He would be born in Bethlehem. God is sovereign and is at work. What does Joseph do when he gets the decree? He obeys the magistrates and registers as this is God using the responsibility of man yet God is sovereign

over all. So, we rest in His sovereign hand and we act according to His Word with confidence as He is fulfilling it on us, in us and through us.

We see the sovereignty of God and the call of the responsibility of surrendering to Christ when Jesus says in Matthew 11:25-28, [25] *At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; [26] yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. [27] All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. [28] Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Here is the glorious truth of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility and we see it as two threads woven into the fabric of the life of a believer.

The sixth couplet are the two marks that show up in all that we have studied in the Advent, worship and witness. They worshiped and they told others. They worshiped and they witnessed. Those are the two marks of those who have been laid hold of. We're looking at our witness this coming year with project Andrew – bring them to Him by bringing Him to them, bringing the Gospel to people, being an ambassador of Christ. We want to be clear of the Savior and clear to people of your condition without Him as we speak truth in love. We have to love people enough to tell them the truth, and we have to love the truth enough to tell them we love them.

Secondly, could we have in the body of Christ a culture that attracts a world that is in despair, division, polarization, that is in the midst of a death spiral? Could they see something different? Could our lives and our homes not like the world with statements of pride or arrogance and fortresses, but could they be opened doors and empty seats that we bring people through to tell them of the love of Christ – worship and witness?

Finally, there's no neutrality with Jesus. You're either saved or lost, rising or falling. It's not 'Well, you know, I'm not a Christian yet, but I'm just kind of suspending judgment.' No, Jesus says, 'if you're not with Me, you're against Me' (Matthew 12:30). You're not suspended, but praise God that you're considering and I pray He moves you to Jesus but there is not a third option out there. I invite you to Him. I know this – unless the Holy Spirit is upon you, you'll just dismiss me, probably thinking 'When will this vain babbling be through?' But if the Holy Spirit is upon you and Jesus comes and is presented to you, you'll be like Simeon, for you'll open your arms and receive Him who has opened His arms to give you life evermore. This can't be done without the Holy Spirit but the Word of God has been brought to you today, and the Holy Spirit always shows up with the Word. I pray that He is giving you eyes to see and ears to hear if you're not in Christ yet and I pray He gives you the arms to receive Him who has spread His arms at the cross to redeem you.

Our Anglican brothers and sisters who are faithful to Christ have a good point. They end Sunday evening services with the Song of Simeon that says when you come to Him now you're ready to depart – right with God and God right with me. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Spend a few moments in personal prayer right now. Lord, speak to our hearts that the Song of Simeon might mark us receiving Christ, praising our God, proclaiming Christ, and now ready to depart for that which is far better. Thank You Father for Your Word. May we be the worshipers and witness You want us to be, in Jesus' Name, Amen.