

## Simeon's Song for the Messiah Luke 2:28-35

Disclaimer: Material for this message was adapted in part from sermons found on the Sermon Central website.

Do you know what a bucket list is? It's a personally composed list of those things you wish to accomplish or places to visit before your death. I have probably kept a bucket list going since I was thirty. But growing older, it is interesting to notice what items get crossed off – not planning on hang gliding anymore – and what gets added. Certainly, for Betty and myself, our visit to Israel was the fulfillment of a dream that had long lived on my bucket list.

To be able to stand in Shiloh where the boy Samuel answered God, "*here am I,*" and on Mount Nebo where Moses got to see, but not enter the Promised Land, will forever change the way I read my Bible. If only the Muslims weren't so defensive of the place, perhaps we could also have walked up on the temple mount, not only where Jesus walked and taught, but also where Joseph and Mary and their newborn baby met a man whose only bucket list desire was to see the face of the Messiah before he died. Let's learn something more about this person.

In today's scripture, Luke continues on to describe other events following the immediate birth of Jesus that do not usually get included in our Christmas stories.

- Such as, when he was 8 days old, in accordance with Hebrew law, the baby was circumcised and given the name of Jesus. Genesis 17:9-14
- Then concluding their 40 days of ritual impurity after child birth, Joseph and Mary brought an offering of two turtle doves in order to be declared clean, so that they could once again enter the Temple confines. Leviticus 12
- While not mentioned in this text, there in the Temple, they paid the redemption price for their first-born child (*God's agreement with Israel was that every firstborn born belonged to Him, firstborn animals other than cows, sheep, or goats, were to be sacrificed, while firstborn children were to be redeemed at the price of 5-6 silver shekels; approximately \$5.00* Numbers 18:15-16 ).

From these simple actions we learn that Joseph and Mary not only obeyed the angel in naming their boy Jesus, but also as faithful Jews, they obeyed all the laws of Moses regarding their son. In fact, Luke mentions five times that they did for their son, *everything required by the Law of the Lord.* Luke 2:39

Then, having paid the redemption fee, perhaps just standing in the Temple Courts with their infant son admiring the beauty of this place, to their surprise Mary and Joseph are approached by a stranger, a very old man named Simeon. With a look of utter joy and worship, he takes their child into his arms and lifts up a song of praise to God.

Luke tells the story this way

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.* Luke 2:25-26

We only know a little about Simeon, but it still tells us much about this man's relationship with God.

- The name "Simeon" means "he who hears."
- Like Zechariah and Joseph, he was a righteous person and devout towards God.
- Simeon's bucket list held only one item; he was "*looking forward to the consolation of Israel;*" meaning, he was waiting to see the Messiah.
- That God's Spirit rested on him and actually led him not only to the Temple that day but also to the baby Jesus tells us that here was a person who lived in a close relationship with the Lord and, as per his name, was always listening for guidance from God.
- Finally, his desire to see the redemption of Israel was so strong that God's Spirit had promised Simeon he would live until he saw the Messiah with his own eyes

So with the baby Jesus in his arms, Simeon lifted up praises to God,

Master, now dismiss your servant in peace ...  
for my eyes have seen your salvation ...  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.

Luke 2:29-32

*Master, now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*

Luke 2:29-32

Following his song of Godly praise, Simeon then blesses the amazed parents and continues on to give a specific, not so comforting prophecy to Mary. Through his praise and prophecy here is what he said about this new born Messiah.

First, that **Jesus was not a deliverer, but the Deliverer**. Simeon said "*For my eyes have seen Your salvation.*" In other words, to see Jesus was to see God's offer of salvation to the world. Philip Ryken writes: "*Recognize that the fulfillment of all expectations has come in the person of Christ... Like Simeon, we long to see Him with our own eyes, and we treasure the expectation that one day we will.*"

Also, this salvation would be for all people. As a Greek follower of Jesus, Luke knew that the Messiah's coming had not been for the benefit of just one group of people but for everyone. It was the arrival of the Magi which signaled that the Messiah's birth was no secret to the world. Thus, even though born after dark in a barn, Jesus' birth had been *in the presence of all people*. He would be *a light of revelation to the Gentiles*.

Jesus came to shine the light of God into every nation, every tribe, and every tongue. The work of the Messiah and the words of the Gospel were always meant to be global in scope.

But as long promised, he had also come to God's people. Simeon calls Jesus "*the glory of Israel.*" In this baby, Simeon saw the fulfillment of all the hopes and fears of all the years, echoed by Jewish people across the centuries. This baby was the world blesser that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This baby would be the great prophet that Moses had said would come after him. This baby was the son of David who would rein on his throne forever.

Yes, Jesus was truly God's promised deliverer for all people, but **He would also be a divider**. The coming of Messiah would NOT bring salvation and peace to everyone. Following his song of Godly praise, Simeon's smile fades away as he uses three different images to illustrate how people would also resist and reject Jesus.

**Jesus would be a stumbling stone.** Simeon predicted that, *this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.* Coming from the imagery of the "rejected stone in the Book of Isaiah, this means that while some will rise to new life, others would stumble over the Messiah and be crushed by Him. Isaiah 8:14-25. Cf Psalm 118:22

**Jesus would also be a Sign that would be opposed.** Simeon added "...*And He will be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.*" In His day, many did rise up against Jesus; many still do today. When face to face with Jesus, people's real thoughts are exposed. We are laid wide open before His light. As Jesus would later say about Himself, *and this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.* John 3:19

**Finally, Jesus would be a Sword** that would even pierce Mary's soul. Here is a side to the Christmas story that isn't often told. From His very birth, a dark shadow would loom both over this child and His mother's life. Simeon was saying, "Mary, they are going to touch this child, and you won't be able to do anything about it. They are going to hate Him, they are going to lie about Him, they'll spread rumors about you and Joseph, and they will smear His name with malicious lies. Then one day they will beat Him and nail Him to a cross and you will have to stand by helplessly and watch your son die."

We are quick to talk about the joy of Christmas, but we often leave out the sword that comes with it. We like to talk about blessings but forget the burdens that come with following Christ. We celebrate God's favor but flee from problems. Listen: Following Christ will always cost you something.

Jesus satisfies, but suffering often comes along with faithfully following the One who suffered for us. The Apostle Peter would later write to persecuted Christians, "*to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*" 1 Peter 2:21

I don't think you would catch Simeon greeting us with, "*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.*" Rather, he pauses, clears his throat and tells Mary that Christmas will never be merry and the New Year will never be happy until all people come to Jesus' light and surrender their lives to the Messiah.

Here's the truth. Since Jesus has entered the world, He has divided the human race; causing the fall and rising of many. Because of who He is and what He came to do, Jesus forces people to make a decision about Him. Our Bible does not hesitate to use powerful imagery – Jesus is either the solid rock that you build your life upon or He's the rock that you stumble over.

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In closing what lessons might we learn from this man named Simeon, upon whom the Holy Spirit rested and who was promised that he would live, until with his own eyes, he saw the "salvation of the Lord," in a baby named Jesus.

**First, we need to be in the right place in order to hear from God.** Simeon was in the Temple at the right time, as also were Joseph and Mary who made it a habit to follow God's Word. Annually they would make the four-day journey to Jerusalem for the Passover along with taking Jesus there for His Bar Mitzvah when He was 12. Parents, get in the habit of putting you and your family in the right place by going to God's place every week. And once you've put yourself in the right setting, make sure you're ready to hear and obey.

**Second, Don't give up.** Wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled in your life. The message of Christmas is "don't quit!" Don't give in to the darkness and despair; God's promised Light who came once before has also promised that He would return again. Hold on to the one who is holding on to you. Keep watching and waiting for the next appearance of God's Messiah. And in the meantime, don't stop doing what's right.

**Third, cultivate being filled and led by the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is mentioned three times in verses 25-27. When the Holy Spirit prompted Simeon to move, he didn't sit still. I wonder what would have happened if he had not responded? Don't procrastinate when God prompts you to do something -- you may miss out on a miracle.

Here's something to do to join in with Simeon in listening for God's guidance. When you're out and about, ask God these kinds of questions,

- Who do you want me to talk to?
- What do you want to teach me?

- Why have you put me in this place and in this position right now?"
- Go on a God-hunt. Look for Him in the ordinary and unexpected.
- Instead of being upset when your plans change, look at that interruption as an signal to speak with someone, or to learn a lesson that God is trying to teach you.

**Also, begin to marvel again.**

- This past Christmas did you take the time to enjoy the lights and beautiful displays, Or, were you too caught up in the busyness and stress of the season?
- Has Christmas become too predictable, too familiar?
- Have you heard the Christmas story so much that it no longer astonishes you?

Actually, Christmas can be a dangerous time of the year for us. Our annual celebration of Christmas can immunize us to its reality. We hear just enough of the story each year to inoculate us against the real thing, so that we never really catch true Christmas fever. Remember how excited you were to meet Jesus for the first time. Some of us need to come back to that.

Finally, like Simeon, **you're not ready to die until you have met Jesus and seen for yourself the salvation that only Christ can give.** When Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms, he said, "Lord, I'm ready to go home now. I can die in peace."

The whole point of a bucket list is to maximize every moment of our existence so that we live our lives to the fullest. Simeon's list was created by God Himself. So here's a question. **What does God have on your bucket list?**

- The question is not, "What do I want to do before I die?"
- The question is this: "What does God want me to do?"

The only thing on Simeon's list was to see the Lord. What about you? Are you ready to see His salvation right now? Only after you have also personally met the Messiah and trusted Him as your Savior, will you no longer live in darkness, and will death no longer be your enemy.

Finally, never forget, that Jesus is God's savior, but He is also God's divider. Not only at Christmas, but all of your life you will only have two options regarding Jesus Christ. Either you join with Herod in trying to kill Him or you join with Simeon in reaching out to Him for salvation. There is nothing in between! If you are indifferent, you've already joined the side that wants to kill Him.

Jesus is not just the reason for the Christmas season...  
He is your reason for living...and for dying.