

Scripture Reading:

Luke 2:20 “Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. **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 [Mary’s] purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought [Jesus] 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."

'Faithful Simeon'

Those who know me well, remember that Simeon is one of my favorite characters in the Christmas accounts. This year we even have a Simeon with us as one of our new covenant children! Today I want to turn to the example of Simeon and continue our review of faithful Saints in the Christmas story who serve as powerful and practical examples for us today!

We have been using familiar characters to see how Biblical faith is lived out and to learn why they are important examples for us today: A faith that hears and submits to God’s leading, a faith that takes action and a faith that remains steadfast in God’s truth.

We saw this with Mary, a young girl who is given astonishing news by the Angel Gabriel and willingly says, behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Mary goes on to be the God-bearer, the mother of God but remembers the truth of God’s Word when she sees her own son as her Savior!

We saw this with the wise men who saw and responded to the sign that God gave them in the east. They came and worshiped the new born King, bringing Him gifts: Gifts that reminded us that God’s Word had taught that Jesus would come as the suffering Savior.

This morning we come to faithful Simeon. As with Mary and the Wise men we know little of his background... No word about his faithful parents and grandparents or the instructors who faithfully taught him the Scriptures! We are simply told that Simeon was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. Simeon was a Spirit-filled man who understood what God was about to do...

- His faith and understanding is reflected in the prayer that He lifted up
- A prayer that many in the Church still sing today.

Here at Church of the King, we sing Simeon's prayer as we are commissioned each week, and so it is important to review just what he is saying and how it applies to us today.

Again, we must not think of Simeon as another extraordinary case which has no meaning for us:

- Thinking, well sure if God told me that I was going to see something spectacular, like the Lord's Christ then I would be VERY faithful!

If I may jump ahead to the 'application' part for a moment, let us think about that: Do we have promises that we fail to act upon?

Children, what does the Apostle Paul tells us about the 5th Commandment?

The 5th is... Honor Mother & Father

Paul reminds us that it is the FIRST commandment with promise... "that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

How is that any different from what the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon? Do you believe God? Do you make obeying the 5th Commandment a priority?

Think about it this way:

- Would Simeon have seen the Lord's Christ if he had slept in & not gone to the Temple that day?

OK, for you adults:

- What is something the Spirit has plainly told us?
- Well, we could consider a lot of things, but let's start with a simple question:
- Is the Kingdom of Jesus going to grow or shrink?

We should know the answer to that question is that it will grow, but for those who may have doubts, let me give you a simple assignment:

- Find a SINGLE verse in the Bible that even remotely teaches the shrinkage of His Kingdom!

So we know what is true, but how do we live? What vision do we transmit to our children?

This is why Simeon's example is SO important: God tells him he will see the Lord's Christ before he dies: Now he is in the Temple on the appointed day and finds a baby boy just about six weeks old... Could Simeon have doubted?

Would anyone have blamed him for hedging his proclamation just a bit: You know, saying something like, "when this child grows into a man He might prove to be the Savior." After all, to say the things that Simeon did while holding this small child might have brought those raised eyebrows and people saying something like: 'he is getting just a little carried away'...

- Like the reaction we might get today if we plainly stated that the Kingdom of Jesus is going to fill the earth!
- And sadly, some of the highest eyebrows would be in the Church!

We must learn to be no less bold today than Simeon was that day in the Temple

This is why we have used Simeon's prayer as our commissioning song since we began worship services here at Church of the King.

Since we sing it each week, let's take just a moment to review what Simeon said after he took the baby Jesus up in his arms:

In verse 29 of our text Simeon says, “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”

God has been faithful to Simeon fulfilling what He promised:

- **Simeon would not die without seeing the Lord’s Christ.**

What a glorious picture of our dependence on our sovereign God for our salvation: Not only is Simeon trusting that God would accomplish all that needed to be done through this helpless babe...But we also need to remember the surrounding circumstances: King Herod had just tried to destroy this child, killing all the young babies around Bethlehem just a few weeks earlier. Now his wicked son was taking the throne and here was Simeon with Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem. Just as the angel had already protected Jesus, Simeon had no fear that God would accomplish His plan of salvation.

And what a GREAT plan of salvation it was:

- **A plan as we saw last week, which troubled King Herod and all of Jerusalem!**

The Jews expected a great salvation, but saw it as one focused only on them:

- **God would show the world His great salvation as the Jews rose up with a new King David and threw off the evil shackles of Rome and the rest of the wicked world!**

This is not what God had planned nor what Simeon rightly understood from the Scriptures...

In verse 32 he continues, “A 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 Jews had become proud and forgotten all of this, hating the very people they were to minister to. We will see this over and over in the Book of Acts as the Spirit begins to carry out what Simeon saw this day at the Temple holding the baby Jesus

The Gospel was going to bring in the Gentiles and it would be the same Gospel God had revealed in the Old Testament: The glory of God’s people... Israel!

God’s great plan of salvation was to bring together Jew and Gentile, tearing down the wall of separation. This wall of hatred would be torn down along with all other walls of separation that fallen man has erected:

- **Men & woman;**
- **Young & old;**
- **Rich & poor;**
- **Slave & free...**

- **Examples of which we find 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 this prayer than it was for faithful Simeon...

- **Simeon could 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: 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 the Old Testament in a few scrolls kept safe in Israel.

- **We have the completed cannon with all of the New Testament and the entire account of the life of Jesus and all the Epistles to explain it means.**
- **God's complete Word is now available in almost any language and can be communicated around the world via the Internet.**

We don't 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 in 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' truth to make sure we stay the course!**

These are the simple lessons of faithfulness we should learn from Mary, the Wise men & now Simeon.

However, Simeon then turns to Mary and reminds us of one more important lesson:

- **Faithfulness to God does not come without a great cost**

Certainly there is a great cost to our pride when we believe the Gospel, but it can bring external costs as well... Simeon turns to Mary and says, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against [yes a sword will pierce through your own soul also], that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

As Theron and Mike taught us during the Advent season this year, the coming of Jesus brings division

- It brought life and joy to the Wise men who responded in faith
- It brought a troubled mind and death to King Herod who hardened his heart.

These divisions have continued throughout all of Church history and continue with us today. Here Simeon points out to Mary that her faithfulness will result in some very great pain in her life: As the mother of God she faithfully raises Jesus and watches Him bring His ministry to Israel...

But in the end this loving mother has to stand at the foot of the cross as the hated Romans drive spikes into His hands and feet and finally a spear into His heart...

- The sword that Simeon said would pierce the soul of Mary.

Great faithfulness brings great risk and we must be willing to keep our eyes on Jesus and not these costs. Mary knew from the beginning that her service would not be easy...

- She would be a young unmarried girl found to be pregnant for starters!

However, despite her occasional lapses, Mary remained faithful to the end where Simeon's prediction was fully experienced by Mary. But there at the foot of that cross she receives very special care and comfort from her Son and Savior as He places her under John's care.

The example of Mary should encourage us when we face those types of emotional trials, where family members scorn us or we see the toll of the attacks that come from the world against faithful Saints...

- Attacks that can be very discouraging if we do not keep our eyes on Jesus.

The Wise men also paid a steep price for their faithfulness:

- They properly responded to the sign by making a journey that involved a loss of much time and expense.
- They risked their reputations in coming to a great King like Herod and not returning as he had asked could have meant physical danger as well.

And finally they present to Jesus very meaningful, but also very expensive gifts which came at a great cost to them.

The wise men should be our example when we are tempted to put our time and money ahead of the priorities that God has for the advance of His Kingdom...

As we will see again in the Book of Acts, this is not monasticism or socialism where we despise money and wealth:

It is the proper use of the blessings that God brings to His people:

- Remember there would have been no gifts for Jesus if the Wise men were not wealthy enough to bring them in the first place.

And finally, what was the cost to Simeon?

We are not told specially but he was certainly putting himself in great physical danger by proclaiming what he did at the Temple that day!

We will soon come to Stephan in the Book of Acts where a very similar proclamation brings a swift death.

I think the lesson from Simeon is that we do not look at the outward risks when clearly called to proclaim God's good news.

- **I think of the group of Christians last year who felt led to go to the Castro district in San Francisco where they prayed for and witnessed to those caught up in the sin of homosexuality.**

The reaction was so violent that they required a police escort to leave safely.

They have not yet opened up the arenas and brought back the lions in this country, but it is becoming more and more difficult to present even a simple witness in the public square...

- **Look at the heat that Brit Hume has taken this week for suggesting that Tiger Woods could not find forgiveness in Buddhism.**

Simeon stood up in the midst of great danger with the baby Jesus in his arms...

- **And yet he did not fear to faithfully proclaim the coming victories that God would bring.**

Should we fear to do less after seeing the many victories that God has brought to His people so far in the advance of His Kingdom?

- **I think not!**
- **And yet we often do...**

I hope and pray that in 2010 we will rightly remember and ponder these great examples

- **The example of Mary, the handmaiden of the Lord**
- **The example of the wise men who followed God's sign bringing gifts**
- **And the example of Simeon as he took up the baby Jesus**

Examples we should remember and ponder each and every time we are commissioned and sent forth to serve this same child: The Child who God has made both Lord and Christ!

Communion Meditation: Hebrews 12:1-2

"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."