

SIMEON: LIVING A LIFE OF HOPE

LUKE 2:22-35

God surrounded the Birth of His Son with some of the most hope filled passages in the Bible.

The story of Christmas is an inspired collection of pictures captured by God for our learning, in His Word.

Each one of the details we know of Christ's Birth are intimate scenes experienced by only a few, and for just a moment; but enjoyed by all of God's children ever since.

This morning as we turn to Luke 2:22-35, we see:

A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

Today I would like to challenge each of you from one of those precious moments, as nearly six-week old Jesus was on His way in the arms of His parents to be dedicated in Jerusalem's Temple.

Joseph and Mary would have undoubtedly been walking up the entrance called the Southern Steps. I love to teach this passage standing in the midst of a group of Holy Land pilgrims with Bibles opened.

It is one of those moments when you can feel the very place the event happened in God's Word!

Around Christ's parents would have been the tens of thousands of pilgrims who each day streamed in and out of that astounding structure. The Temple Mount was a 40-acre platform that could easily contain a quarter-of-a-million people standing on feast days.

Herod enlarged the platform Solomon had built and surrounded it with one of the greatest colonnades of the ancient world. Among this forest of gleaming white 60' stone carved pillars moved the rivers of worshippers that filled the Temple each day in Jerusalem.

Luke captures the moment when just two, of these thousands of worshippers, met in a Divine appointment.

THE EVENT GOD DIDN'T WANT US TO MISS

The transcript of their meeting has been preserved through the inspiration of God, and comes to us as part of God's record of Christ's birth.

Please follow along in Luke 2:22-35.

As we read we'll meet Simeon and marvel with him at baby Jesus.

Then as we listen, the message God wants us to hear comes through the words Simeon spoke as he magnified God for sending Jesus into the world.

Luke 2:22-35 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.”

Pray

LITTLE CHOICES THAT MAKE BIG DIFFERENCES IN LIFE

This morning, if Christ's coming, or an accident He allows, or a disaster He chooses doesn't intervene—most of us in this room will live to be nearly 80 years old.

Some of us here may have exceeded that length of days, but for the vast majority, there are many years of days left for us.

Since many of us will end our pilgrimage alone with our partner preceding us, how will we finish well, old and alone, for some of those years?

Simeon models what it means to make choices to walk in the power of God's Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit ensured for Simeon—a life that mattered, that counted, that pleased Jesus.

A Spirit filled life that gets Christ's well done, and that pleases God: is a CHOICE.

A Spirit filled life is a chosen path.

What pathway are you choosing to live?

SIMEON'S CHOICE TO HOPE IN GOD

Before we go through the elements of Simeon's song of praise to the Lord, step back and think about his life with me.

If Simeon was old (although the text doesn't say that but it is implied) he must have had much to ponder.

- There were all the disappointments in his life he could choose to re-live, and feel the painful sting again and again;
- and then there were daily needs he could choose to worry over;
- and all the injustices of life around him he could choose to bemoan;
- and of course if he was elderly he could choose to dredge up so many things from the past to regret.

But Simeon **chose** to not dwell on all the bumps that jolted him on life's rough ride.

Instead, God's Word notes that Simeon, had made it a habit in his life to look at God's plans for his future with brightness and hope.

The secret of Simeon's walk was in those many little choices made by faith, to live

in hope.

Hope led him to love the Lord more and more; and such love always pours out in worship and expectation for God.

Thus we can see from these verses that worship and praise were natural for Simeon because: God was at the center of his life.

GOD WAS AT THE CENTER OF HIS LIFE

As you hold God's Word in your hands, let this truth overflow into your mind, your heart, and your life—nothing is as bleak as the life of an unbeliever. They must live only for today because they have no firm hope in God's promises of a glorious tomorrow.

With the promises of God to cling to, every day has hope and good cheer.

As believers we know the truth of the Scriptures that nothing can separate us from God's love—neither old age, nor grim circumstances.

Remember today that nothing but your own wrong choices can keep you from God's comforting HOPE.

God is sufficient for our needs today and forever.

Allow God's Spirit to use Simeon's example to energize you to look ahead to God's great plan for each day.

Choose to live in hope one day at a time like Simeon.

Now as we walk back through the text, look at these elements we can glean from the life of Simeon. We could call these elements to ensure that you live each day of your life as fully as possible for Jesus.

I call these the...

THE PILLARS OF A HOPE-FILLED LIFE

Luke was guided by the Holy Spirit to get not only the events of Christ's dedication in the Temple, he also gets the very words that were spoken. Listen to this mighty Old Testament saints as he is introduced and described by God.

First, like Simeon desire to live the Spirit-filled life God offers:

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.**

Do you truly want to be full of, overflowing with, and controlled by the Holy Spirit?

Are you really inviting His Presence to control your heart and life each day?

Do you seek to rely upon Him to lead and guide you?

All of those are either a yes or a no answer, not kind of.

Next, like Simeon seek the Spirit-illuminated life God offers:

Luke 2:26 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 knew what God wanted him to do in life.

He was confident that the Lord had a plan.

Simeon rested by faith in God will for his life.

Do you have that calm assurance?

Have you asked the Lord to illumine His Word and open your eyes to see what He has planned for your life?

The greatest joy in life comes from knowing and doing God's will for your life.

Thirdly, like Simeon rest in the Spirit-led life God offers:

Luke 2:27 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,

Do you walk through life being consciously led by the Spirit?

Being led by the Spirit is one of the evidences of salvation (Rom. 8:14).

We should be very conscious of His guiding work in our lives.

Finally, like Simeon, Enjoy the Benefits of a Spirit-satisfied Life of Hope

Luke 2:28-35 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." NKJV

SIMEON WAS READY TO DIE AT ANY MOMENT

In Luke 2:29, the word "depart" in the Greek has several meanings, and each of them tells us something about the death of a Christian.

- Depart can mean 'to release a prisoner' which speaks of our redemption from the slave market of sin. This aspect of salvation is the most frequent theme of the saints ("the redeemed") in Heaven.
- Depart can also mean 'to untie a ship and set sail', and this is the picture Paul gives when he told Timothy "I am now ready to depart".

II Timothy 4:6-7 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. NKJV

- Depart finally speaks of 'taking down a tent' and this is the metaphor of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 as he talks of his and our death being the laying aside of our tents.

2 Corinthians 5:1-8 For we know that if our earthly house, **this tent**, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are **in this tent** groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. NKJV

DIVINE PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH

Each of these pictures gives us a beautiful and comforting hope.

Death is only the **start** of the greatest journey of our lives. Death involves **leaving behind** our slavery to sin, **taking down** our tent of our temporary earthly dwelling, and **setting sail** for our home beyond the stars.

As God's people, we are not afraid of death because it only frees us from the burdens of this life and leads into the blessings of the next life.

God's Word promises us the greatest satisfaction possible in life through trusting and submitting to God's plan for our lives. Paul looked upon life as a race course with clear lines and markings so that he could know that he had stayed "on track" and was "finishing the course" that the Lord had laid out for him (2 Tim. 4:6-7).

There is a course laid out by the Lord for each of our lives.

We must strive to follow that path, and not run outside the lines and get "disqualified" (I Cor. 9:24-27).

We must long to not "lose our reward" by straying from the specific plan God has for us in our lives (I Cor. 3:13-15).

One of the clearest parts of our lives that God has mapped out is our death.

We should think about that more than the day of our birth (Ecclesiastes 7:1) as Solomon was used by the Holy Spirit to remind us.

SIMEON SAW JESUS AS THE LIGHT FOR HIS LIFE

In Luke 2:32: "Simeon referred to Jesus as "a light for revelation."

Few metaphors capture Jesus' mission as well as being the Light.

Light makes the stillness come alive;

Light settles fear;

Light reveals mystery;

Light enables relationships.

Jesus is God in the flesh, eternal light breaking into a spiritually dark world.

Jesus is your light.

He is not a distant sun, remote and driven by physics' laws.

Jesus is the light of your life—your courage, your enabler.

Start each day by turning on the light—a moment of meditation on God's Word, a prayer of dedication to live for God all day".¹

SIMEON MADE THE CHOICE TO PRAISE GOD THROUGH LIFE.

How did Simeon praise God?

It had to start by a conscious decision to push aside all of his problems and complaints in order to see and then celebrate God's generosity.

In those days just getting daily necessities took much more work than we are used

¹Barton, Bruce B.; Veerman, David ; Taylor, Linda Chaffee ; Osborne, Grant R.: *Luke*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1997 (Life Application Bible Commentary), S. 51

to.

So as he made it through each day, Simeon learned to thank God for his “daily bread” as Jesus would call it.

But the clearest choice this passage reveals is that Simeon had chosen to re-orient his heart around God’s message in His Word and the priorities that the Bible taught him.

Simeon chose to live in hope.

He walked in step with the Spirit of God, and his life was an offering of praise.

That is the beautiful portrait that God's Word gives us of this man we only see here in the entire Bible. I hope he will become an example and inspiration for many of us to also live in hope, energized by God to live this life of praise.

But the final message from this whole passage is that...

SIMEON WAS SPIRIT FILLED

Look back at 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.*

Do you really know about the Holy Spirit?

The key chapters in the Bible to understand are—Galatians 5, Ephesians 5, Romans 8, and John 14-15.

But more than anything else, the Spirit of God can totally alter the way we live; God's Spirit can change us into brand new people!

We need to look again at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. NKJV

Fullness of the Spirit is first described as a change in our internal walk with God.

INTERNAL ATTITUDES CAN CHANGE TO: LOVE, JOY, PEACE

The Scriptures show us that a truly spiritual person will be growing in a visible way in each of these areas.

LOVE is the absence of selfishness. Can others trace my progress in expressing God’s love? Am I less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month or last year?

JOY is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances. Because Love and self-centeredness can not coexist. Do those that know me and watch my life see me as a joyful person?

PEACE is the internal serenity that only God can give. Troubles are not absent. Rather, God is present! Has peace become more and more a way of life for you this year?

EXTERNAL BEHAVIOR CAN CHANGE TO: PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS

Secondly, we will see the Fruit of the Spirit in **a change in our Public Walk with Others.**

LONGSUFFERING or PATIENCE is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. Ask yourself, “Am I more patient than I was three months ago, or less?” If we are not increasing in patience it is only that we are not yielding and submitting to the

Holy Spirit.

KINDNESS is a beautiful reflection of Christ's behavior in our lives. It is the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. Kindness will soften any word or act that might hurt another. Is my character showing an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others?

GOODNESS is being Godlike! It is the opposite of fallen humanity. Am I a visibly better person than last year? Do people see me doing good to all those around me?

DAILY HABITS CAN CHANGE TO: FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, DISCIPLINE

Finally, we will see the Fruit of the Spirit in **a change in our Personal Choices we make**

FAITHFULNESS is the idea here. A trustworthy and dependable life. The kind of person that keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. Am I making strides in reliability and dependability?

GENTLENESS or MEEKNESS is the opposite of asserting ourselves. What shape is my personal agenda in? Is it intact and my rights being defended? Or, is it in hopeless shape, crucified with Christ and fading?

Self-control or DISCIPLINE is the mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones. The only force that can control or flesh is the Holy Spirit. Do others see me as graciously under the control of God's Spirit of Discipline?

FULL OF THE SPIRIT OF HOPE

Well, are these nine elements God pours out into our lives by His Spirit present? Are they growing?

The proof is in how we are with our relationships

Simeon chose to live energized by God's Spirit of hope.

He walked in step with the Spirit of God, and his life was an offering us praise.

That is the beautiful portrait that God's Word gives us of this man we only see here in the entire Bible.

I hope Simeon will become an example and inspiration for many of us to also live in hope, energized by God to live this life of praise.

We can live in hope this day and the days ahead when we surrender to Jesus.

LIVING FOR JESUS

I can't think of a better way to give the gift Jesus really wants from us than to declare from our hearts the truths of Hymn #

1. Living for Jesus, a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.
 - o *Refrain:*
O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne;
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

2. Living for Jesus Who died in my place,
Bearing on Calv'ry my sin and disgrace;
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading and give Him my all.
3. Living for Jesus, wherever I am,
Doing each duty in His holy Name;
Willing to suffer affliction and loss,
Deeming each trial a part of my cross.
4. Living for Jesus through earth's little while,
My dearest treasure, the light of His smile;
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,
Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.