

Sripture Reading:

Luke 2: “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 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." ”

The Fulfillment of Simeon's Prayer

It is very appropriate that we hold the first worship service here for Christ Covenant Church on the first Sunday of the New Year, but also on what in the church calendar is considered Epiphany Sunday, which simply means manifestation:

Today we will consider the prayer of Simeon: A powerful prayer relevant to the Saints this morning in Sacramento as they were challenged with the responsibility for their first domestic mission work, helping the Saints here in Menlo Park establish a strong local church just as Reformation Covenant Church did for them just over three years ago

It relevant for the Saints here in Menlo Park as you begin your new work and seek the Lord's wisdom and guidance to establish a new local church that honors the Lord and advances His Kingdom.

Simeon is one of my favorite characters in the Christmas accounts and I believe that he certainly does not receive the attention that he should! I never tire of plumbing the depths of this account and his prayer

- **My goal is to focus on the occasion of this prayer and the content of this prayer as we seek to serve the Lord of Glory in the 21st Century.**

Luke provides some important details about the early life of Jesus; who John proclaims as the Word made flesh.

- **With His circumcision He is placed in the membership of God's covenant people**
- **With the temple purification rites for He and His Mother Mary we see the reality of the fall and utter corruption of mankind.**

With these simple acts, Jesus is shown to be the promised Messiah that would be the seed of Abraham and we see the need for Him to be the suffering Savior, the Lamb that will take away the sin of the world. It is at this point we are introduced to Simeon, who is "just & devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel."

- **One who is waiting for the promised Messiah!**
- **A faithful Saint who the Holy Spirit had comforted with a special promise and guided to the Temple on this very day.**

When Simeon sees the baby Jesus Luke tells us that he, "took Him up in his arms and blessed God." We see in Simeon's actions the same things we will see in his prayer:

- **He had hope**
- **He had contentment**
- **He had vision**

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

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**
- **Simeon was content to be "waiting" for the "Consolation of Israel." – The coming of Messiah!**
- **Simeon had great vision, believing that God would show him the Messiah and that this Messiah would be the light of the whole world**

Simeon then 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”

- **Here we see Simeon praying with the same hope, contentment and vision we saw in his actions:**

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

His hope was in the promise of God, as it must be with us: Christ has promised to build His Church and that is the promise in which Christ Covenant Church will have its hope . This is why we baptize our covenant Children, demonstrating that our hope for them lies in God’s promise!

Simeon is content with what God has allowed him to see, an important lesson that we must all learn:

- **God has promised to conquer the nations through His Church: And He will, even if we cannot understand how all the details will be worked out!**
- **We are to be content with where God has placed us, based on the hope that we have in His promises!**

Finally, Simeon reflects 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.”

Here is only one ‘just and devout’ Jew who held no station that we know of, holding an infant son of a poor family, not able to afford the sacrificial lamb, believing that this infant was the light which God had promised through His prophets to bring to the whole world.

- **So, Simeon is a Saint who had great hope, a Saint who was content with his station in life and a Saint who was a man of vision**

His example teaches important lessons to us as individuals and to our churches as we plant a New Church here in Menlo Park: With anything less we are just “playing church” and will be a blind as the religious leaders of that day who missed Jesus when He was in their very midst that day at the Temple.

As with Simeon, our hope is in the promises of God: His sure Word, which is why as a young church you must all resolve to be men & woman, boys & girls of the Word.

We must be a people that are content with where God has placed us:

Content as individuals...

Not too smart, not too dumb,

Not too short, not too tall,

The wrong hair color or not enough hair

Blessed to be in God's Covenant, Baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one of His children: Having the hope of seeing Jesus, not as a new born child, but as the Lord of Glory at the Father's right hand!

Content as families:

Not too big, not too small,

Not too rich, not too poor,

Believing that God's great promise of salvation is unto us and our children

Young people believing that God's promise of life as a result of obedience to their parents is a REAL promise that bears much fruit

Content as a Church:

Not too big, not too small

Not too fancy, not too plain

Believing we are the Body of Christ and that EACH & EVERY member has an important role to play.

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: "Everyone wants to save the world, but no one wants to wash the dishes]*

➤ **God will save the world, we just need to remember to wash the dishes:**

➤ **And to be content while we are doing them!**

This is why we must consider the important commands about contentment that are given to us by both Paul & Peter:

Paul tells the Philippians in chapter four verse six: "6 Be anxious for NOTHING, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

OK kids, here is where we need your help: What things are we to be anxious for?

And Peter gives the same instruction in his first epistle where we read in chapter five verse five: "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all

of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting ALL your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Once again kids, which "cares" do we have to take care of?

BUT how do we live the "just and devout" life that Simeon gives us an example of? How can we be a people filled with real hope, content with where God has placed us and consumed with God's vision of His Kingdom filling the whole earth?

Proverbs says that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord...

Jesus said, "the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."

And Paul told the Saints at Corinth: 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many... 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

If Christ Covenant Church is to succeed; if Church of the King in to going to grow and if Reformation Covenant Church is to remain a strong Biblical Church:

Then we must heed these instructions, as individuals and as churches...

- We must be a people who rightly fear God
- We must be a people who rightly worship God
- We must be a people who rightly function as the Body of Christ

It is toward this end that Paul prays for the Saints in Ephesus which certainly provides a good model of how WE should pray for each other:

"15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe,

[Notice: Hope-contentment-vision?]

according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He

put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

- **This is how we must pray for each other, to the end that our Savior Jesus Christ might be manifested as the light of the world!**

In our text, Simeon gives us one more important lesson as he turns to Mary to give her words of comfort and warning:

- **A lesson that is not often welcome in the modern seeker friendly church**

We must remember that the very purification rites that brought mother and child to the Temple were a reminder of the fallen state of mankind... I'm OK – Your OK is NOT Biblical!

As with all the sacrificial rituals of the Old Testament, this sacrifice demonstrated the need for the Messiah to be a suffering Savior.

Simeon knew that Jesus was God's Messiah... The suffering Messiah!

I am sure that Simeon had the words of Psalm 22 in mind when he said to Mary: “a sword will pierce through your own soul also” warning her of the agony she as the mother of Jesus would suffer at the foot of His cross.

Yes, Jesus would be rejected of men, and through Him “the thoughts of many hearts” would be revealed, separating the sheep and the goats, like the two thieves that would die at His side: One going to paradise and the other to eternal damnation.

John says of Jesus, the Word, that “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men,” and then proclaims 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 Gospel: Jesus – THE Light that will lighten the Gentiles**
- **And that is who and what we, as His Saints, are here to proclaim!**
- **The Gospel, the good news that Jesus has come to save His people from their sins must be the center of all that is done here at Christ Covenant Church!**

Allow me to close with some wisdom from Proverbs chapter four:

[with a reminder of how God blesses those who seek after Wisdom!]

King Solomon is instructing his son about the ways of righteousness so he can be ‘just and devout’ like Simeon

He uses the familiar theme of light contrasting it with darkness in v.18:

“The path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble. 20 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my

sayings. 21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; 22 For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. 23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. 24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. 26 Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.”

Do you want to be “just & devout” – Knowing the hope, contentment and vision of someone like Simeon?

Then commit anew to study these Books of Wisdom!

Be ready to “hear & do” the Words of Jesus!

- **Wise counsel for a New Year**
- **Wise counsel for a New Church!**
- **Wise counsel for anyone who wants to be a part of the fulfillment of Simeon’s prayer!**

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.”