

I Saw...The Promise

12.17.17

Christmas Series

Luke 2:21–40 (NIV)

²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Jesus Presented in the Temple

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had **seen** the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ **For my eyes have seen your salvation,**

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."

³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were **looking** forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

1. Are there any impatient people at church today?

A. Most of us are not very patient people.

1. And most of us do not like waiting.

2. We don't like waiting:

a. In lines at the store.

b. For food to finish in the microwave.

c. For the preacher to make his point.

3. The only thing I am convinced people will wait for is the best parking spot at Walmart.

a. I've seen people almost park in the aisle waiting for someone to put their stuff in their car, strap in their kid, and make a phone call.

b. Just so they don't have to walk very far to walk into Walmart.

B. As impatient as we are with natural stuff, I think most of us are even more impatient for spiritual things.

1. Most of us aren't good at "waiting upon the Lord".

2. We want to have an idea, say a prayer, and then immediately see the result.

3. But that is not how God works.

4. God refuses to be our personal servant or magician, granting our every wish whenever we wish it.

C. However, God does hear our prayers and he is willing to bring to pass what we desire.

1. When our wants and desires are aligned with the will and heart of God, He is more than happy to answer our prayers.

2. And that is the case with Simeon and Anna.

3. They had dreamed of seeing the Messiah before they died, and God made that dream so.

Before we can understand the significance of what Simeon and Anna saw, let us first take a look at where this story happens.

2. Mary and Joseph had brought Jesus to the Temple. (Picture)

A. This is no longer the Christmas scene we are used to.

1. The Shepherds have left.

2. The Magi were on their way.

3. Instead, life is going on as normal for this Jewish family.

4. And life, for the Jews, revolved around the Temple.

B. When a woman gave birth, a couple of things were required.

1. First, Jesus had to be circumcised at 8 days old. Verse 21

a. On this day, the parents publicly declared the name of the baby, Jesus.

b. The Apostle Paul shows us the significance of Jesus' parents following the Law that someday Jesus would himself fulfill.

Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV)

⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

2. The second action that parents had to do after a birth of a child was to go to the temple to be "cleansed".

a. This was to happen 40 days after the birth of a son.

b. This may seem strange to us today.

c. But this ritual was necessary because the discharge of blood after having a baby made the mom unclean and unable to go to the Temple.

d. It was also a time of thankfulness that God had brought the mother and baby through child-birth.

3. When Mary came to be pronounced clean, she was required to bring a sacrifice.

a. God is the original designer justice, so he provided two levels of sacrifices:

1. The rich were to bring a lamb and a dove to the temple.

2. The poor were to bring a dove and a pigeon.

b. We know from the offering that Mary presented that Mary and Joseph were poor.

1. What about the gifts the Magi brought?

2. More than likely, the Magi had not yet arrived so the offerings were based on what they had, which was very little.

C. All of this is happening in and around the Temple. (2nd Picture)

1. This temple was the 3rd (and last temple) built in Jerusalem.

2. This temple was called "Herod's Temple" because he was the one who commissioned it and started it.

3. Think about this for a moment:

a. Herod, who claimed to be king of the Jews, built the temple where the dedication of the one who WAS BORN to be King of the Jews took place.

b. *It was here in the heart of Jerusalem, among the leaders and people who would someday reject Jesus' salvation, that the parents stood up and declared "His name is Jesus" which means "the Lord is salvation".*

D. It is here in this setting that we are introduced to two people: Simeon and Anna.

1. Simeon was a man led by the Spirit, which is unique for this time.
2. Anna was a prophetess, again unique since there had been no known prophets for hundreds of years.
3. It is on the lips of these two-devout people, that Jesus' purpose for living was declared.
4. For today, we only have time to look at Jesus through the eyes of Simeon.
5. Through the eyes of Simeon, we see Jesus as the Promise.

3. Simeon had dreamed of seeing the Messiah.

A. The Jews looked forward to a Messiah.

1. This person would redeem Israel from her sin.
2. And he would cause Israel to be great again.
3. Simeon dreamed of being able to see the Messiah before he died and God promised him that it would be so.

B. On the day of Jesus' dedication, the Holy Spirit directed Simeon to be at the right place, at the right time.

1. Have you ever experienced God doing that for you?

- a. God directs your day and path in such a way that something amazing happens.
- b. The Lord promised to direct the steps of the righteous.
- c. And on this day, the Spirit of God led Simeon to see Jesus, the promised Messiah.

2. Picture having waited for a lifetime to see something.

- a. And then one day, the Spirit says “today is the day!”
- b. Imagine your excitement, anticipation, and joy knowing that today your lifelong dream would come to pass.

C. What would you say on the day your dream comes to pass?

1. Most of us may stutter, or be overwhelmed, or maybe speechless.
2. Simeon, led by the Holy Spirit, declares something powerful.

D. First, Simeon thanks God for allowing him to see the embodiment of salvation.

1. Luke 2:29–32 (NIV)

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

and the glory of your people Israel.”

2. When Simeon looked at the baby in his arms, He saw God’s promised salvation.

- a. In the midst of the temple, where rituals were performed daily prophesying of a future salvation, Simeon looked at the babe in his arms and said Salvation has come.

b. And this salvation was not only for the Jews, but for all people, all nations, and all walks of life.

c. **The most dangerous thing the church can do today is to write off the people that Jesus loves.**

E. Simeon then announces the cost of this salvation.

1. Luke 2:34–35 (NIV)

³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

2. The cost of salvation led to:

- a. Many people in Israel rejecting Jesus as their Messiah.
- b. People speaking against God and His Son.
- c. The real motives and thoughts of people being revealed.
- d. And a sword piercing the soul of Mary.

3. It is this last thought that stands out the most:

- a. Simeon prophesies that Mary would suffer, too, for the salvation of the world.
- b. 30 years later, as Jesus is dying on a Roman cross, Mary felt the pain a mother feels.
- c. Mary felt the tip of the spear as it pierced Jesus' side.
- d. Mary's soul (her mind, her will, her emotions) was pierced at Calvary.

4. **The Promised salvation came at a great cost.**

4. **But for the moment, Simeon sees the Promise of God.**

A. It is this promise that we celebrate during Christmas.

1. Jesus' birth and dedication happened amongst the backdrop of:

- a. An evil king, who ruled with fear and hatred.
- b. A temple, built to demonstrate his grandness and as a political favor.
- c. Jesus was born to a people that would later reject him, persecute him, and kill him.
- d. Jesus was born at an evil time, for a sinful people, in order to bring about a great salvation.

2. Look around you today and see that we also live in an evil time, among sinful people, and we are still in need of a great salvation.

- a. We need a savior just as much today as Simeon did then.
- b. Fortunately, the One who can forgive sins and change lives is no longer a baby but the full-grown Son of God.

B. This truth brings us to a place of decision and choice.

1. If you do not have a relationship with Jesus, today is the day to start.

- a. Your relationship with Jesus starts with you trusting Him by asking him to forgive you of your sins and to change your life.
- b. And Jesus is able to forgive you and change you today.

2. For others of us, we have friends, families, and neighbors who need to hear and see this great salvation.

- a. If what is told about Jesus' birth is true, then what Jesus said about hell is also true. Nobody deserves to go to hell.
- b. During this Christ season, I want us to commit to praying for our friends and loved ones like never before.