

A SERMON IN SHOES

Luke 2:22-38

January 1, 2023

Dr. Ritch Boerckel

Today we are going to continue our series in Luke. We've been looking at some Christmas songs and today we're looking at Luke, chapter 2. We're going to be reading about a man named Simeon, we're going to start in verse 22. Forty days after Jesus is born, this is the time of purification for Mary that was required for her to be able to go back to the temple and now Jesus is going to be dedicated in the temple and we catch up that narrative – a really important part of the Christmas story here in verse 22:

²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first 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 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous 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 And he came in 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 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

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

³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

As Luke tells us the story of God's miracle of clothing His eternal Son in human flesh and blood, Luke includes some really interesting characters. One of those is an old man by the name of Simeon. Though Simeon has a central place in the story, I do not know of any Christmas carols we sing about Simeon. We sing about the cattle who may have occupied the stall in Bethlehem, but I cannot remember singing about Simeon. Yet here he is sort of central to the story.

So this story begs the question: Why did God elect to include Simeon in His telling of the incarnation of the Messiah and give Simeon such a central place?

Two reasons, I believe, stand out to me for God's inclusion of Simeon in the Christmas story.

The first is that God is giving us credible witnesses who testify to Jesus' deity.

He wants us to know who this is from the very beginning while this little one is just a baby. Remember that on the outside the infant Jesus doesn't appear any different than any other infant. There is no halo around His head, contrary to many paintings. There are no distinguishing physical traits between Jesus and other Jewish babies. There's no obvious emotional or intellectual disparities. Jesus cries when He is hungry. His little body is susceptible to injury and disease. He doesn't understand words that His mom whispers to Him. He's comforted by His parents' care and love. And so in this very vulnerable, very weak form God ordains for His people to tell of the true, divine, omnipotent, sovereign nature of His Son – and to do so while His Son is occupying the form of a little baby.

What a wonderful variety we see of the witnesses that God brings to the witness stand to show us that this little one is unlike any other baby. This little one is God worthy of our worship.

God brings before us an older Jewish priest and his wife, Zachariah and Elizabeth. He brings forth an unborn baby, John the Baptist. He brings as a witness before us angelic creatures, Gabriel at the center with a host of angels singing of who this little one is. He brings before us shepherds standing in the field. He brings before us a couple of young teenagers, Mary and Joseph, who testify to who this little baby is. He brings before us gentile Persians, the wise men coming from afar. And He brings before us this very old priest – and just below this an older prophetess as well by the name of Anna.

These all testify to this One being God, being Savior of the world. These believing saints did not merely express joy in the birth of a baby, it's a beautiful story on a human level, but they bowed down and they submitted their very lives to this One who is born a King! King of the Jews, but really King of the world.

Wonderfully, these witnesses had so little revelation from God to go on compared to us. They didn't know of Jesus' miracles. They had not listened to Jesus' sermons. They didn't see Jesus live an absolutely sinless, righteous life. They did not watch Jesus suffer and die on the cross for sin. They didn't see the empty tomb. They didn't listen to His promise of return. They didn't watch Him ascend into heaven. They didn't experience Jesus' promise of a Holy Spirit who would indwell all those who believed in Him. Yet here . . . at the beginning when Jesus was helpless and small, visibly not extraordinary . . . they believed, they believed God's word!

They declared this child to be "Son of the Most High," "holy—the Son of God," the "horn of salvation," "Christ the Lord," "Savior," "Your salvation," and "light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to Your people Israel." These are all names they assigned to Him.

So God places these righteous people in His Book at the beginning of the story of His Son so that we might listen to their testimony, and in listening to them give their testimony in God's Word to believe for ourselves. To believe that Jesus is extraordinary. He's not just special, He is beyond that—He is God of very God! And then in believing in Jesus to be our Messiah, our King, our Lord that we would have eternal life in His name. That's God's purpose.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you are commissioned by God to tell others that Jesus is God, that is Jesus Savior, that Jesus is the King who rules and reigns over all. And I want you to be encouraged. I know that being a witness has always been hard and it ever will be hard until the Lord comes—there will be difficulties and persecutions and challenges accompanied with being a witness, but I want you to know that God is with you even as He was with these we read about in Luke chapter one and two. And that God is actually willing to use you. You say, "what do I know, I hardly know how to speak," and yet here are these ordinary people who are also weak and simple people, men and women, who God used today

still for us to hear the testimony of their faith, of their response to this One, and in hearing their testimony they have an impact upon us. And I want you to know that same privilege that was given to them is given to each one of you who follow Jesus Christ. Let's take up the torch, the light of Christ, into our world. It's a dark place.

So why did God elect to include Simeon in His telling of the Christmas story? Well, God is giving us credible witnesses to testify to Jesus' deity. But the second answer I would give is that God is giving us examples of a right response to Jesus. That on the basis of Jesus is Savior, He is Lord, He is King—what's our response? And here in these men and women of the Christmas story we learn and see an example for us to follow. And that's what we are going to consider today in regard to Simeon.

The main idea that we are going to trace through this story is that our whole life is to be a sermon to our world that Jesus is the Messiah, it's glory, glory be to God. That's what the theme of our life, the message of our life is intended to be now that we know who Jesus is. Our whole life mission and purpose is to worship Him and to tell others of Him.

When I was a boy some 5-8 years old, I often attended children's church. And during children's church on Sunday mornings we would sing praises, we would pray together, and we would learn about God from His Word. I think back upon that time and think what a tremendous impact those who ministered to children in the church I grew up in had upon us. I still think about it—it's profound. What a privilege. It's not just some sort of "ought to" or "duty" or "hey, we need new children's workers." Where else can we have the opportunity to have such an impact that 40, 50, 60 years later someone is going to be talking about how God used someone, used you to bring about a dynamic, eternal change. I think back and I can see the faces, I can see the smiles, I think of Miss Sandy and Miss Jeannie and so many who ministered the Gospel through song, through word, and through prayer.

Many of the words of the songs that I learned through the children's ministers, those precious men and women who ministered to us and taught us, many of those songs I have not sung for 40-50 years—I still remember the words. They had a huge impact on me. And one of them that came to me as I was thinking about Simeon was a little song that says:

*"Do you know O Christian that you're a sermon in shoes?
Do you know, Oh Christian, you're a sermon in shoes?
Jesus calls upon you, to spread the gospel news,
So walk it, and talk it, a sermon in shoes. (Ruth Harms Calkin)*

I thought about that song because I think that's what Simeon's life is. You know, we don't know hardly anything about him. The only thing we know about him is exactly what's written here. No Bible scholar has more information about Simeon than you do just from reading the text. But his life is a sermon, a message about Jesus, about His person, about His magnificence, about His holiness, about His purpose, about His wonder. So look at verse 22 with me now :

22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (Luke 2:22 ESV)

So according to Old Testament law, a new mom was ceremonially unclean for 40 days after she had given birth. During this time of uncleanness, she was not to go to the Temple and she was not to touch anything holy. So this law helped God's people to remember something fundamental and that

something fundamental is that we are sinful, that we must not casually approach a holy God, that God must do something to prepare us to make us ready because not one of us has the moral quality, the righteousness standards by which to enter God's presence on our own. So these 40 days were set apart as a time to think about your own sinfulness, your need for grace. So the 40 days were completed, and at the time she and Joseph take baby Jesus to the Temple to dedicate Him to the Lord.

The Old Testament law also required that the first born son in every Jewish family be specifically set apart, dedicated to the LORD. Now every tribe of the 12 besides the tribe of Levi could redeem their sons back into the family by paying five shekels of silver as a ransom price. And this is what Joseph and Mary were doing in Jerusalem in the temple. They were there for Jesus' presentation. In addition, they were at the Temple to offer a sacrifice that the law required in order to fulfill the purification responsibility for a new mom. And so this is a sin offering by the way. So Mary offers a sin offering indicating she acknowledges that she has sins that need to be forgiven.

Look at verse 24 now:

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." (Luke 2:24 ESV)

A poor family offered a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons—that's what they offered because they are poor.

Verse 25:

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him." (Luke 2:25)

You might circle that little word "now"—it's kind of quiet and it's easy to overlook in our ESV translation. "Now there was a man in Jerusalem..." If read the KJV or NAS you see the word "behold" which causes us to be a little more observant that something special is happening. In the Greek New Testament this word stands out in bold letters like the writer is shouting to his readers a statement of divine appointment, "BEHOLD, God is doing something." Luke wants us to know that this meeting between Simeon and Joseph, Mary and Jesus was not by chance—that God is ordering the steps, He's ordering the timing of Mary and Joseph being in the temple with Jesus at the very time that Simeon is in the temple and that God is ordering these three to meet in this exact place and at this exact time to fulfill His purposes.

Earlier in Simeon's life, God made a promise to Simeon that Simeon would not die until he had seen the Messiah, the Promised One. God is sovereignly aligning people's schedules to see that His design is fulfilled. That's what God does. We react, but God is the One who acts. He is the One who is in control of everything, even over the evil that is done in this world. He's not author of evil, but He is control so He's moving all of human history toward this one great ultimate end.

We do not know anything about Simeon other than what these verses tell us. They reveal two specific traits about this man. First that he was righteous and he was devout. Now in this, Simeon is rare among Jewish men in his day. For most people in Simeon's day had been spoiled by the Pharisees and the Sadducees to lead a very external life. In other words, the kind of life that was religious, the kind of life that read the Bible but never allowed the Bible to sink in, never allowed God's spirit to take control. So

they gave honor to God with their lips and with many forms of worship, but their heart is far from Him. They have a zeal for religious tradition and religious forms, but there's no real love for God.

So Simeon is one of those rare ones in this day who actually believed God's Word and who desires to honor God every day of his life—to love God with all heart, soul, mind and strength. Do you know anyone like Simeon? How encouraging these folks are when we meet them. To see someone who is real, who's not just coming and singing some songs and going through some motions, but someone whose heart is on fire for God. That's Simeon—he's righteous.

The word “righteous” is a really important one. Whenever the word “righteous” is used in the Bible, it is not talking about a kind of righteousness that we produce by our own human efforts. The clear testimony of the Bible is that no one is righteous based on their own works. In Isaiah 64, God says:

*“We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”
(Isaiah 64:6 ESV)*

So how then does the Bible describe Simeon as being “righteous” if every kind of human kind of righteousness is like a polluted garment to God? How can Simeon be righteous? Well, Simeon can be righteous the same way any of us can be declared righteous by God. And that is through obtaining a righteousness that comes from God as a gift through faith. There is no righteousness accepted by God that comes on the basis of our own merit or the basis of our own efforts.

Consider Abraham: *“And he believed the LORD, and he counted it [this belief, this faith] to him as righteousness.” (Gen 15:6 ESV)* So it's not as though Abraham didn't sin, Abraham did sin and some of those sins are recorded. But Abraham believed the Lord, and then God gave Abraham the gift of righteousness; I'm going to set My righteousness upon you. Theologians call this an “alien righteousness” because it doesn't come from one's own person.

I wonder, do you possess God's righteousness? When God looks at you, would He call you righteous—not because you've perfectly obeyed the law, but because you've received a gift from God's Son that's obtained for you through His perfect life and through His perfect sacrifice upon the cross. Would God say you're righteous? And here's what it is—how can God say that I'm righteous? Well, if I believe in Jesus, Jesus is a generous Savior and He promises to provide this righteousness to everyone who believes, everyone who believes.

The text also tells us that Simeon is “devout.” That word means that Simeon everyday he's concerned with honoring God—this passion to honor God consumes him. He wants his whole life to be an expression of worship. He's the great example of what Paul calls all of us to when he says,

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1 ESV)

Simeon just says I want to be a worshipper and that is what was on his heart and mind everyday. If you asked Simeon at the beginning of a new year, “Simeon, what are your New Year resolutions?” At the top of his list would be: I want to live for God! That's the first thing and everything else is like written in small, fine print compared to this one. This is what I want to do—I want to live for God this year! That's

what I want—that’s why he is called “devout.” We need more Simeon’s in the church. So what does Simeon specifically teach us about living our lives for the glory of God? If you’re taking notes, we are going to look at four ways Simeon encourages us in worship. Four commitments:

First, we worship God by . . .

1. Waiting for God’s comfort—

I love this about Simeon. I love how it is expressed. Look at verse 25.

“waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” (Luke 2:25)

You know, if you happened upon this Simeon in the Temple that day, you know—you passed by him, you noticed he’s standing over there in the corner, and you say, “Hey Simeon, looks like you’re waiting for something—what are you waiting for?” Simeon said, “I’m waiting for the consolation of Israel, that’s what I’m waiting for.”

Simeon looked at his nation and he saw so much conflict, so much chaos, so much darkness, so much distress, so much unbelief, so much religious externalism, so much sin. And you know, he had read his Bible—he’d read of God’s plan to bring redemption to Israel, to bring a king to Israel who would one day rule over Israel, sit on the throne of David. And he looked and saw that’s not happening today, but I’m waiting for that to happen because I know it’s going to happen. And Simeon knows that godly people before him waited all their life and they died without it happening. And he’s praying to the Lord and he wants so badly to have his day be the day when he sees the beginning of God’s work of bringing consolation, that means comfort, to Israel. And God promises Simeon that he not going to die before he sees it, and that really charges Simeon’s faith (that promise), and he says, “I’m waiting, I’m waiting, I’m waiting.” You see, Simeon knows God connects the comfort of Israel with the Comforter . . . the peace of Israel with the King, . . . the light of truth with the Prophet . . . the cleansing of hearts with the Priest who is to come, and he’s looking for that person to be born.

What Scriptures may Simeon have dwelt upon that caused him that caused him to think he should wait for the consolation of Israel? Well there are so many, we could spend years studying that question. But let me present a couple of them for you because one of these at least has become a Christmas verse that is often used on Christmas cards:

“3 He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; 4 but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.” (Micah 4:3–4 ESV).

He looks around and sees there’s fear all over the place, there’s violence all over the place, there’s hostility all over the place, and he says, “I just long for my people, the nation that God set aside with special promises, a special covenant to experience that. And then Micah 5:2:

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” (Micah 5:2 ESV).

You know, Simeon takes those promises and interrupts them literally. He's not just looking for personal salvation, but for a national deliverance as well.

And here's the application I want us to have as we think about Simeon's example: Jesus has promised to come a second time to fulfill the promises of a new kingdom. He's given us that. And the fulfillment of this promise includes Gentiles as well as the Jews. What a wonderful thing. So, the worship of God calls us to actively wait for those promises to be fulfilled! And I think part of the weakness of the church is a weakness of not really waiting, having no expectation of the promises being fulfilled. So we look at our newspaper—what's going to happen tomorrow, we listen to news reports about what's going to happen tomorrow and that's where we set our hearts. Instead of opening our Bibles—what's going to happen tomorrow, I'll tell you what's going to happen tomorrow—one day there's going to be a King that going to be coming. And one day, everything that's evil, that's upside down in this world is going to be turned right-side up. And everyone who opposes God, they're going to be removed. And that's why we need to tell them the Good News now while there's still opportunity to be saved before that day coming. Because once that day comes, there's no hope—there's only despair. And when that King comes, He's going to bring perfect peace and righteousness, and nations will no longer be at odds with each other. In fact, when you look at the military budget of every nation—it will be a big, fat zero—no spending on military. And the peace of the King will rule over all the earth. What a day that will be!

Brothers and sisters, this is the time that we pick up those promises and again say, “we want to be a people who are waiting for those things.” I remember when I was preaching through the book of Revelation one year and it came to me, whether through a commentary or something else, but I started having a practice that I kind of lost, but I want to renew it for 2023 to wake up in the morning with the message, “Good morning Lord! Will I see you today?” I want to have that kind of expectation and I want to have the kind of relationship with other believers that experience that expectation.

The second thing about worship that Simeon teaches is that worship is about believing in God's promises.

2. Believing in God's promises

Look at verse 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.” (Luke 2:26 ESV)

God had given Simeon a very personal and special promise. I think that God gave this special privilege to Simeon as a part of the reward for waiting so eagerly for the consolation of Israel to come. And so we ask the question: “when did God give that promise and how long at this point in Simeon's life had he been waiting?” And the text doesn't tell us, but his willingness to die right after it's fulfilled shows us that he had been waiting and waiting—like this was the whole point of his existence, like this is all I've really lived for; I just want to see this happen. He may have waited 10, 20, 30, 40 years—we're not told. But his waiting was like the waiting of a child on Christmas morning. Do you ever watch your children wait to open presents? Oh man, it's tough. We delayed opening presents for a few days in our family and every day the little grandkids who were visiting with us and staying with us would ask, “today...do we get to open presents today?” “No, not today.” And this is the kind of belief – this believing that God gave me a promise that I'm gonna hold onto that promise. And that promise strengthened Simeon's joy.

So God stirs up great hope within us in order to multiply our joy in Him as we look to the promises that God gives us.

Look at verse 27

“27 And he came in 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” (Luke 2:27–30 ESV)

Prior, he saw with the eyes of faith, but now he’s seeing with his physical eyes the salvation that God has provided for people.

Now the temple was likely full of people bustling around that day. Yet it was Simeon’s hope and expectation that caused him to see that which nearly everyone else in the temple that day missed! There is a special Child in the midst. There’s no sense from the Luke’s account that everybody was all excited about this little One. They didn’t see what Simeon saw. Why? Because they didn’t have faith. Their hearts were still filled with unbelief

I wonder how much we miss of seeing God’s glorious hand at work in our world because we don’t set our hope upon Him, we don’t set our faith upon His Word. I believe that God’s fingerprints are all around us, and so often the same event happens and one sees God’s amazing work and the other just walks by and thinks this is just normal life. What makes the difference? It’s not the event—it’s the heart of faith. The one sees God at work.

So this week there is a family in our church that took a bunch of youth for a ministry trip down to Gulf Shores. And so they’re telling us about how things are going and asked us to pray for them. I think there are some 42 people down there. They’re working with another church. And they’re saying, “We don’t know how things are going to go, but we’re just praying. We need prayer!” I love that! Because they’re saying that we believe God’s gonna work. I’ll tell you about just two events. One of the family members was talking to a nurse who is an unsaved person, an unbeliever. And she told them that it would be great if they could come because there is a young man in their hospital without hope, he’s in despair and he needs someone to come visit. She’s an unbeliever and she’s inviting a youth group and Christians into the room—and then all of these kids are singing praises to God in this person’s presence. We don’t know whether this person will be saved. We pray so. But then there’s other patients and they start having them go into all these other rooms and into the ICU to be singing and praying with these patients. You might say, “well how did that happen?” It wasn’t as if the people were like “hey, let’s make sure we have all these permission slips”—God just opened a door. That’s God!

Another thing that happened—they’re loving singing together and there’s one of the gals (teenager) that plays the guitar, but they’re singing so much that she was getting tired. So another says that she plays the piano, but we don’t have a piano. So they were going to go to the store to see if they could buy one, but when they went around Gulf Shores they couldn’t find a piano. So they came back a little discouraged because this person wants to use their gifts in this way. And they asked one of the church members or ministers if they knew of a place where they could purchase a piano. They said, “You’re kidding—you want a piano?” She said, “yes.” And he said, “I have a keyboard in the trunk of my car that I was planning on give to Good Will today!” Let me ask you, do you think that just happened? No, God is at work! I just believe the church has an opportunity to see more and more of that as our hearts connect

to God in faith. God in His Word delivering His Good News to our hearts. Amazing things, amazing things.

We worship God by . . .

1. Waiting for God's comfort
2. Believing in God's promises
3. Rejoicing in God's salvation

Look at verses 27 and 28:

"And he came in 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, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said," (Luke 2:27-28 ESV)

And again, it's right for us to imagine Simeon's face beaming with absolute joy. He lifts up his voice with gladness as he praises God for the gift of His Son to all mankind. By faith, he knows who this little baby is and with exultation in his heart, he sings. Look at verse 29:

29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;" (Luke 2:29 ESV)

You can just see the expression of gladness, satisfaction and happiness as he would as he would ring out these words before the Lord.

30 "for my eyes have seen your salvation" (Luke 2:30 ESV)

I imagine his eyes are filled with tears of joy as he says, "my eyes have seen your salvation."

31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:29–32 ESV)

Joy. Joy in our worship is not a nice ornament on the tree. Joy is the very roots and limbs and the very leaves and the very fruit of our worship. It's infusing every part of worship. A Christian worshipping without joy is a contradiction. Jesus said:

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:11 ESV)

Paul teaches us that the pursuit of joy is central to the seeking of God's kingdom as he says:

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17 ESV)

Matters of eating and drinking, and fill in the blank because matters of eating and drinking are varied and many, will distract us from what is important to God. What is central to God's kingdom, to God's person, to God's plan is righteous, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

God loves for joy to abound in our hearts. When joy abounds, the Holy Spirit makes good things follow.

Our joy fuels our love for one another.
 Our joy brings honor to the name of Christ.
 Our joy opens doors for us to tell unbelievers about Him.
 Our joy gives us energy in our service and ministry.
 Our joy heals conflicts.
 Our joy changes our perspective about problems and trials.
 Our joy provides soil for faith, and hope, and love.

Frowning, frustrated, unfulfilled followers of Jesus do not cause others to rise up and say that God is great. What can rescue us from joyless worship? And I believe that when we look to Simeon of old, we discover that the answer to that question is simple—it is a profound attention to the salvation that God offers in Christ. When we rivet our hearts upon the salvation that God freely gives us at the great cost of His Son's life, joy flows.

*30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.””
 (Luke 2:29–32 ESV)*

For my eyes have seen your salvation—he says, “that’s the reason why I have such joy, that’s why I’m blessing the Lord.”

Simeon took joy in his own salvation. But he also exulted in provision of God to bring salvation to the Gentiles as well as to his own nation.

You know on that day in the Temple, let’s take ourselves back there, I am sure that Simeon could have had many good reasons to gripe or complain about the condition of the world, the condition of the nation, the condition of his neighbors, the condition of the “church” (temple). But Simeon fought for joy. And as he fought by faith, he found it! He found joy in the one constant . . . and that is the LORD who provides salvation and who is salvation. That’s Good News!

Simeon likely did not live long after this event, at least that’s the way I would read this story. At Simeon’s funeral, I think what would they have said about Simeon? I think one of the things that would have been said is that he waited for the consolation, he believed, and man, that guy was filled with joy! Every time you’re around him, he just seemed like he had a joyful spirit. And I think that is what the church needs. And that’s what the church can be full of—not because we produce it, but because the Holy Spirit willingly produces it in every believer who simply submits, submits every day to the working of God’s Spirit in us.

You know this last week was great joy for me on a family level as all my boys were home, their wives, and all the grandchildren—so much joy that God has given in these human gifts to all mankind, the common grace that God provides for everybody, believers and unbelievers. One of the specific joys I have when Jackson comes home is that Jackson—he’s our musician and he loves to sit at the piano and he loves to play and he loves to sing. And I never know when he’s gonna sit down, what he’s going to sing. But almost always, he’s singing praises to God. And I was in the other room and I heard him playing, so I started listening and he started playing one particular song and my eyes started to tear up as I listened to his worship of God. He sang a song from clear back when I was in high school by Keith Green and as I listened, I started singing with him:

My eyes are dry
 My faith is old
 My heart is hard
 My prayers are cold
 And I know how I ought to be
 Alive to You and dead to me
 But what can be done
 For an old heart like mine
 Soften it up
 With oil and wine
 The oil is You, Your Spirit of love
 Please wash me anew
 With the wine of Your Blood

You know we worship God . . .

1. by waiting for His comfort
2. by believing in His promises
3. by rejoicing in His salvation

And last, Simeon's example teaches us that we worship God by . . .

4. Serving in God's ministry

You know we're not told whether Simeon had an official ministry in the Temple or whether he simply ministered in the Temple as the Lord directed him Sabbath after Sabbath. But we have a sense that the ministry to the LORD was part of his life. He came in the Spirit to the Temple ready to do the Lord's work. When Joseph and Mary came in, Simeon initiated his ministry to them. He took Jesus up in his arms—he blessed Jesus, he spoke words of praise to God, blessing upon Jesus, and then he continues to fulfill this ministry to Mary and Joseph. Look what he says in verse 33 and 34:

"33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'" (Luke 2:33–35 ESV)

Now the first part of Simeon's ministry was really joyful and light and airy, you know, sort of non-controversial. But now God calls Simeon to minister to Mary and Joseph with some hard truth. Now think for a moment, you read verses 33-35 with me—let me ask you when any one of your friends has a brand new baby, their firstborn baby and you write them a note congratulating them on their newborn baby, how many of you have ever written anything like verses 33-35? "Hey, this child is gonna pierce your soul like a sword going through you." No, you don't do that unless God tells you and you have a special ministry from the Lord. Now this is unique, it's one of a kind, but Simeon, I believe, said, "Lord, whatever message You give to me, I'm going to be faithful to deliver it because this ministry I have is not my ministry, this ministry is Your ministry." And he tells Mary a hard word that this Child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel. In other words, he says you know people are going to have mixed reviews of what they think of your son. Some will learn of your son and listen to what He has to say and they'll believe and receive Him. There's going to be a rising of spiritual life, spiritual vitality in them, spiritual reward. But some are going to listen and they're going to become more distant from God,

they're going to be hardened toward God, they're going to become more rebellious, they'll become darkened. And when they do, they're going to hostile to Him. And Mary, in fact, it's going to be hard, but I want you to know what this person, this baby, God gave you, what His mission is life is. Part of His mission in life is to be despised and rejected by man, and ultimately die upon a cross in order to bring salvation and in order to bring forgiveness for our sins. And, Mary, it's gonna hurt, it's gonna hurt like crazy. That takes us to a scene later in the Gospels of Mary being at the foot of the cross and watching her son. Can you imagine, being mocked and spit upon, being cursed, pierced with a crown of thorns, whipped and beaten, and ultimately crucified. We can imagine the piercing of the heart.

And I say that because when we serve in God's ministry, I want you to know that what really all through Scripture we're taught is when we engage in the ministry of God, we should expect opposition. Opposition is not a sign that God is not working. Often opposition is a sign that we are doing exactly what God calls us to do. Now it doesn't end on a sour note, it's not where the ministry ends, the ministry ends in that Jesus will prevail. He will reign as King over all.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, God calls you to use the spiritual gifts that He has granted you to bring strength and hope and faith and love in your own church family however that is. Worship is not inactive, it's not come in singing, praying, listening and leaving. It's "I want to be involved with God's work," because God is doing something and He gives each one of us who are part of His family a role. That's what worship is.

So here's the main idea: our whole life is to be a sermon to our world that Jesus is the Messiah. Our whole mission in life is simply to worship Him and to tell others of Him.