

SIMEON – A FINE EXAMPLE OF A CHRISTIAN
Sermon for the 1st Sunday after Christmas, 2018
Luke 2:22-40

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Gospel from before, Luke 2:22-40 **When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, they took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord** ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord: “Every firstborn male will be called ‘holy to the Lord’”). ²⁴ They also went 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 by the name of Simeon. This man was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ of the Lord. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him what was customary according to the Law, ²⁸ Simeon took Him in his arms, blessed God, and said: ²⁹ “Now, Lord, You are letting Your servant depart in peace, as You have promised, ³⁰ because my eyes have seen Your Salvation, ³¹ which You have prepared in the sight of all the peoples, ³² a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the Glory of Your people Israel.”

³³ The Child’s father and mother were astonished at the things that were being said about Him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and told Mary, His mother, “Look! This Child is appointed for many in Israel to fall and to rise; and to be a Sign that is spoken against, ³⁵ that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. A sword will also pierce your own soul.”

³⁶ Moreover, there was Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. She had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage. ³⁷ This woman had been a widow for as much as eighty-four years. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting, and praying. ³⁸ Just then she came up to them, gave thanks to God, and kept speaking 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 went back to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

⁴⁰ **The Child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We all need people who serve as examples of godliness for us - individuals who become spiritual role models for our lives, and who by their words and their actions serve to encourage and inspire us. Such people could be our father or mother, perhaps an uncle or aunt, a friend, a Sunday school teacher, a pastor, or simply another member of our congregation.

Such spiritual role models are certainly important. Jesus, whose primary purpose was to save us, also serves as a role model for our lives. He acknowledges that when He says: “*Let anyone who wants to be great among you be your servant; and anyone who wants to be first among you should be your slave, just as the Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many,*” (Matthew 20:26-28). The apostle Paul also in his Letter to Titus urges older Christian women to be role models for younger Christian women¹, and in his eleventh chapter, the writer to the Hebrews describes one role model after another.

In our text Luke describes a New Testament hero of faith - a man about whom we know very little - who, in fact, appears on only one page in the Bible, and yet a man who serves as an excellent spiritual role model for us all. That man was Simeon. Even though there is not much written about Simeon, yet we know that he was grounded in his faith, confident of his future, and was ready to serve his Saviour.

Luke writes: ²⁵ **Now there was a man in Jerusalem by the name of Simeon. This man was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.** Everything that Luke says about Simeon suggests that he was a strong believer, but let’s examine his faith a little closer to see wherein that strength lay.

Simeon’s was a faith, first of all, that was built upon the promise of the Saviour. Simeon was “**waiting for the Consolation of Israel.**”

“**The Consolation of Israel**” was, of course, the Promised Saviour - the Lord Jesus. Simeon was a man who understood the Scriptural teaching of sin and grace. He understood that God’s Law, given by Moses to Israel on Mount Sinai, condemned him in view of his sins. Without doubt he knew the declaration Ezekiel had made many years earlier who said, “*The person who sins is the one who will die,*” (18:4) But he also knew and found comfort and consolation in the mercy of God, for he would have known

¹ Titus 2:3-5

as well the LORD's declaration, also recorded by Ezekiel: "*I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,*" (18:32). Simeon was well instructed in God's plans to send a Saviour - he was looking for that Saviour and took great comfort in the fact that God would not fail to accomplish the redemption He had planned! He put no trust in himself - his own attempts to fulfil God's Law, rather, he put his trust in the LORD!

Note, secondly, that Simeon's faith was the gift of the Holy Spirit, whom Luke describes as being "**on him.**"

We know from the words of St. Paul that "*no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 12:3). Man cannot believe on his own, but faith - that simple trust in the Saviour - had been worked within Simeon's heart, even as it has been worked in our own hearts. It was the Spirit of God that sustained Simeon's faith and moved that faith to become fruitful.

It is that very fruitfulness of faith, which, thirdly, reveals that Simeon's faith was sound and well-grounded.

Simeon was "**righteous and devout**" - not only believing what was right about God and His Promised Saviour, but actively practicing it in his daily living. Simeon did what was right - living honestly with his fellow men. He worshipped regularly and so drew near to God. Usually over the Christmas period, church attendance will increase across the country, but then quickly drop away until Easter, and then there is another spike, before dying away again. Many people are once or twice a year worshippers. Their absence is quite a shame. But not Simeon. He was not a once-a-year, holiday-only Christian, but a regular, devout worshipper. He sets a good example for us all!

Further, Simeon was an example of *godliness*.

Simeon was grounded in his faith, and so should we. If someone were to write a statement about any one of us, would they be able to say the same? Is Christ our personal cornerstone - the One whose Word shapes and defines our faith and our life? Is the evidence of the Holy Spirit present in our hearts and lives, strengthening us each day as we study that Word and worship regularly with our fellow believers? Does our everyday living reflect the justice and mercy of God, so that we would be described as "devout"? If so, then we are well-grounded in our faith. If we are not so sure, then now is the time to come with a penitent heart before God, to ask for His forgiveness, to rejoice in His Son, and to seek the guidance and strength of His Holy Spirit. Jesus has come into this world for us, even as He did for Simeon and everyone else. He wants us - the object of His love, to experience His every blessing and then by His grace to become an example of godliness for others!

Simeon was grounded in his faith, and he was confident of his future! He was also a very unique and fortunate man in one way. We are told that the Holy Spirit had revealed to him, in a way Luke does not reveal, that "**he would not die until he had seen the Christ of the Lord.**" On the day, then, that Mary and Joseph came to the temple in Jerusalem to present Jesus to the LORD, as prescribed by Mosaic Law, we are told that Simeon "**moved by the Spirit, ...went into the temple**" and upon seeing the baby Jesus, he "**took Him in his arms, (and) blessed God.**"

What did this special knowledge given to Simeon and his opportunity to behold the Saviour mean to him? *It meant confidence in the future!* Simeon burst out in praise: "**Now, Lord, You are letting Your servant depart in peace, as You have promised,** ³⁰ **because my eyes have seen Your Salvation,** ³¹ **which You have prepared in the sight of all the peoples,** ³² **a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the Glory of Your people Israel.**" Simeon knew that in his arms lay the Christ! God had kept His promise and, therefore, Simeon knew with absolute confidence that his future in this life, under the guidance of his Saviour, and beyond this life, by the grace of his Saviour, was secure. He had nothing to fear. Consequently, he was ready to die in peace at any time of the Lord's choosing!

It is interesting to note that the Scriptures say nothing about Simeon's age. Luke writes: ³⁶ **Moreover, there was Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. She had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage.** ³⁷ **This woman had been a widow for as much as eighty-four years.** Thus Anna is described as well over one hundred years old. Now, it is generally thought that since Anna was old, Simeon was an old man too. However, Luke offers no evidence that Simeon was elderly. But it doesn't matter, for whatever his age, the promise of the Messiah is of paramount importance to Simeon, and he is content to "**depart**" after he has seen the Lord's Christ.

The important truth for us to take away is that irrespective of age, we can be confident of our future because of Christ. "*But,*" someone may object, "*the Holy Spirit has not given any special revelation to me, and I have never beheld the Christ-Child with my eyes. How can I be certain?*"

Simeon's words of praise give us the answer. Simeon said that God had prepared His salvation "**in the sight of all the peoples.**" The biography of Jesus' life has been recorded in all four Gospels. It has been confirmed by secular historians and archaeological evidence. God has left no doubt that what He has revealed in the Scriptures is true and was intended to bring the light of revelation also to us! No other religion in the world has the authority of God's truth as does our Christian faith in view of the Bible. Therefore, we too can, as Simeon of old, be confident of our future both in this life and in the life to come. Our little ones can be certain that Jesus will walk with them throughout their lives. We, who are older, can be certain that Jesus will be with us as we approach death. Therefore, we are much like Simeon, who serves as our example!

Finally, Simeon, being example of godliness, grounded in his faith, and confident of his future, was now ready to serve his Saviour.

As mentioned earlier, Simeon was ready to die in peace at any time, but he did not die after taking Jesus up into his arms. Instead he immediately began to serve his Saviour by offering his encouragement and support to Mary and Joseph. Simeon “**blessed**” Mary and Joseph, no doubt assuring them of God’s love, guidance, and protection, something they would surely need as they sought to bring up God’s own Son. Then Simeon sought to prepare them with prophetic words of warning. He told them: **“Look! This Child is appointed for many in Israel to fall and to rise; and to be a Sign that is spoken against, ³⁵ that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. A sword will also pierce your own soul.”**

What was the purpose of Simeon’s prophetic warning? It was intended to remind Mary and Joseph that theirs was a very special task - not simply to raise a child in the Lord, but to raise the *Lord Himself* in preparation for His arduous task of redemption. Jesus was not going to face an easy life, but rather a life of suffering and pain in mankind’s place. His goal was the salvation of us all. He paid the price for all, but the benefit would not be received by all, for those benefits are enjoyed by grace only by those who believe. Unfortunately, many reject the work of the Spirit and speak against the very Saviour God has sent, thus revealing the unbelief in their hearts.

When it comes to Jesus the line is drawn - either one is for Him or against Him. Either one believes Jesus is the Son of God and the world’s Saviour, or he does not. Those who believe will rise one day to enter the kingdom of heaven, while those who do not believe will fall into the depths of hell. Simeon believed and was ready to serve, wherever and whenever the Lord needed him.

Dear friends, let us too with humble hearts believe and then serve. How long will we individually serve our Lord? That depends on God’s particular plan for each of us. Instead of becoming overly concerned about how long we may or may not live, let us rather devote ourselves to seeking those ways God would have us serve Him by helping others. We, as Simeon, are to be examples of godliness for our children, for our other family members, for our friends and fellow believers. May God grant us that grace and His every blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Father in heaven, we praise You that when the right time had come You sent Your Son to be the Light of the world and to gather Your redeemed people. We thank You that You have adopted us as Your children through Him, and that You invite us to call You: “Abba, Father.” Enable us by Your Spirit to live as Your loving and obedient children, doing Your will with a glad heart and a pure mind. Give us strong faith and love, that people may see that the focus of our lives is not earth but heaven.

Dear Father, show us Your mercy. Deliver us from all evil. Rescue us from all that we deserve because of our sins. Protect us in the hour of temptation. Hold us with Your fatherly hand, and lead us from the restless ways of the world to green pastures and still waters.

Let Your grace rest on us that, young or old, we may grow strong in the Spirit, be filled with wisdom, and increase in the things that please You. Shine in mercy on all who feel the need of Your mighty aid. Brighten lives filled with darkness, and bring joy into homes filled with sorrow or suffering. Give the light of Your truth to those who rule in our land and elsewhere. Fill with Your wisdom all who are in positions of influence in our society so that godlessness, superstition, and ignorance may be removed from us.

Establish the reign of the Prince of peace over the nations of the earth. Bring all to the obedience of the holy Child. Grant that the light of His life, teaching, ministry, passion, death, and resurrection may shine on every land.

We pray for the sick, the wounded, the hurt, the troubled, and the fallen, especially in our congregations. Grant them whatever they need: health of body, strength of faith, firmness of hope, and, above all, the assurance of salvation.

Hear us, O Father, and direct and govern our hearts that, by Your grace in Jesus Christ, we may be ready to depart in peace and enter everlasting life, according to Your promise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15

¹ The LORD spoke to Moses: ²“Consecrate to Me every firstborn male! The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites, both human beings and animals, belongs to Me.”

³ Moses told the people: ...¹¹ “After the LORD has brought you to the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers and given it to you, ¹² you shall set apart to the LORD the first offspring of every womb and every firstborn offspring of the animals that you have! If they are males, they belong to the LORD. ¹³ However, you shall redeem every firstborn male donkey with a lamb or a kid and, if you do not redeem it, you shall break its neck! Of human beings, you shall redeem every firstborn among your sons! ¹⁴ When in the future your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall tell him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of slave-quarters in Egypt! ¹⁵ When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of human beings and the firstborn of animals. This is the reason why I am sacrificing to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and am redeeming every firstborn of my sons.’ ¹⁶ It shall be a sign on your hand and a mark on your forehead! For the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.”

Colossians 3:12-17

¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, dress yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience! ¹³ Bear with one another and forgive one another if anyone has a complaint against another! You also forgive, just as the Lord has forgiven you! ¹⁴ In addition to all these, put on love, which binds them all together perfectly! ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ, to which you have been called in one body, also rule in your hearts, and be thankful! ¹⁶ Let the Word of Christ dwell richly among you, as with all wisdom you teach and warn one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing to God with grateful hearts! ¹⁷ Moreover, whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him!

Luke 2:22-40

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