

My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation

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Preacher: Rev John Mackinnon

[0 : 0 0] Wow. What a beautiful voice, and what a beautiful message. Jesus, lead us to your heart. And it's lovely to have Danny with us this morning. I've known her for a long time, and it is beautiful to hear her glorify God this morning. That's what we're doing. We want to glorify God. Actually, that's what Christmas is all about, that we might proclaim the majesty, that we might proclaim the glory, that we might prepare the wonder of Jesus at Christmastime. And let me just add to all the different greetings. Let me bring you the greetings of Calderwood Baptist Church over there in Isco Bride. It's a church that you know well, and we pray regularly for all of you. Wonderful to have the woman's aide with us this morning over at Calderwood. It's in the simple things sometimes, isn't it? Over at Calderwood in our coffee shop, we always have free school uniforms, free jackets, warm coats, wellies, boots, all manner of things available just on a regular basis, and people can just walk through the door and take them. And while they're in the coffee shop, of course, they can also have a free lunch and a free coffee and everything else. Because when we celebrate at

Christmas, we celebrate the free gift of the love of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate what it is to have faith in the only one who can set us free, in the only one who can enable us to become those that God, the people that God longs for us to be in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, it's a wonderful time of year. It would not have been right for me to be here and not bring you a Christmas present. And so, I've done that this morning. And first of all, this is for those of you who know and love Jesus. You are a Christian. Maybe some folks here today, they're not Christians.

And I'll share a little bit about that later, and I'll give you something as well, right? But for those of us who are Christians, my friend Jeremy Marshall, Jeremy was a wonderful man. He was six months younger than me. Six months younger than me, but he died this year. He died this year after living for ten years with cancer. Notice what I said. He was living for ten years with cancer. He wasn't dying for ten years with cancer, because he had a hope that transcends this world. He had a hope that transcends this life.

He had a hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who says, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, even though he die, yet shall he live. And so, he really lived that out. What did he used to do for his day job? You know what he did for his day job? He was the CEO of Whore's Bank in London.

Now, that's the oldest independent bank, I think, in the world, but certainly in Britain, right? And he was the CEO of that. I've got no idea what that means, right? He was the CEO of a bank. I don't know what responsibilities you have. But then he got diagnosed with cancer, and they were given 18 months to live. And he was a Christian man, loved Jesus, believed the Christmas message with all his heart. And as a Christian man, he said, well, I've got 18 months left to live. What do you do with that? And he said, well, I'm going to give up banking, because I don't think that's going to, you know, be of much use to me. And he gave up banking, and he started sharing his faith. He'd always done that, but he started to share it in ways that he'd never done previously. He was just always telling people about Jesus, anyone he met. And he used to say that I do evangelism, which is really just sharing our faith. I do evangelism as one who was always discouraged and ineffective. And he says, but what

[4 : 15] I do is just scatter seeds of hope. I scatter seeds of hope into people's life. And so just before he died, he wrote a little book called Scattering Seeds of Hope. And the incredible thing was, by the grace of God, he was given 18 months to live, but he lived for 10 years. So he scattered an awful lot of seeds of hope, right, in people's lives. And many, many people are pointing to faith in Jesus today because of his faithfulness. So that's a little book for all of you today. They're over there beside the coffee, and you can take one of them away, one for each household or whatever, and scatter the seeds of hope. And if you're sitting there thinking, John, this is Christmas week, and I'd love to give one to somebody else, well, do that as well, right? And that's okay. So they're there for you.

Let's turn our attention to God's Word. Luke chapter 2. I know that over the past couple of weeks, in the life of Bells Hill, you've been looking a lot at the Christmas account through Luke's gospel.

Now, Luke's gospel is a wonderful gospel. And what I love about the gospel of Luke is that Luke, the person who writes it, is known as the beloved physician. We meet Luke in a number of different places in Scripture, right? We meet him in Colossians. We meet him in the letter to Timothy.

We meet him in Philemon. We meet him in the, you know, the journey of churches being planted in the Acts of the Apostles. Luke is known as the beloved physician. Now, I love that. I love the fact that he's known as the beloved physician. I don't know about your experiences of doctors, but sometimes you meet doctors who are great doctors, but they've got no bedside manner.

You know that kind of way? You know, it's like, you know, you get the kind of ones you meet, and you say, you know, I'm really sorry, it's terminal, have a good day, right? And you kind of think, I kind of want to be let down a bit more gently, right? But Luke was the beloved physician.

[6 : 15] He was the one who, in actual fact, you could just almost imagine he would have this wonderful bedside manner, this ability to get alongside a person, this ability to long, to communicate clearly all that was going on, and to scatter some seeds of hope right in the midst of all of that.

That was Luke. And one of the great things about the gospel that he writes, he writes it to a friend of his called Theophilus. In actual fact, he writes Luke for Theophilus, he writes the Acts of the Apostles for Theophilus. But by the Spirit of God, he's writing Holy Scripture for you and for me.

One of the great things about Theophilus is the name simply means Theo, that is God, philia, which is love, and really it's friendship, and so it's to be a friend of God.

And he's writing to Theophilus, and he's showing Theophilus how because of Jesus Christ, all who by faith in him can be a friend of God. All who would put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ can be a friend of God. And so he writes to Theophilus, and it's hardly surprising that a doctor is going to begin his account of the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ with two births.

There's just a sensitivity about that. And in actual fact, he writes in Luke chapter 1 about Zechariah and Elizabeth. He writes about the birth, the forthcoming birth of John the Baptist.

[7 : 45] He writes, but what he does is as he writes all this, he's putting it into an orderly account, in order that as we encounter this Word, we can believe this Word. In order that as we encounter this Word, we can trust this Word. In order that we encounter this Word, we would not just encounter the words, but we would encounter the Word himself, who is Jesus, the one that John writes about, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. And so Luke writes in such a way that we can encounter Jesus for ourselves and become a friend of God. It's a beautiful description.

And he moves, because what he does is he looks back into the Old Testament. And he looks into the Old Testament, and he says that in everything that you see in the Old Testament, in all of the law, in all of the sacrificial system, in all of the words of the prophets, it's all pointing towards the coming Messiah, the coming Savior, the coming Deliverer. And he says of John the Baptist, he says that he will be called John. Now, you know, I'm going to sound a bit biased here, right? But John simply means God is gracious. That's what it means. God is gracious, right? And so in the birth of this child, Luke is saying, God is gracious. God is gracious. That is the heart of God towards us, my friends. You know, we are not gracious towards God. We live in our sin, our rebellion, our arrogance, at times our ignorance. We reject God's ways. We don't worship Him as we should. But God is gracious.

God reaches out to us. And then he says, after the birth of John, he describes the way in which the angel appeared to Mary, and he describes, you know, the forthcoming birth of Jesus. And of course, Jesus means Jehovah is salvation. God rescues. God rescues. And the whole of Luke's gospel, in actual fact, can be summarized in Luke 19 verse 10, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. So, the whole of Luke's gospel, this orderly account, but here's what I love about Luke. Here is a doctor with that kind of analytical mind that wants to research things thoroughly, and he wants to do all that so that when we encounter Jesus and the Word of God, we can have faith. We can believe. We can have confidence in the revelation of who God is in Jesus, and we can put our trust in Him. And that's what Luke wants to do. And as you move into Luke chapter 2, and in your carol services, and in your nativity services, and in your events next Christmas Eve, you'll be celebrating all of this next Lord's Day. But in Luke chapter 2, verse 22, which Ethel read for us, we get a little insight into a man called Simeon. A man called Simeon. And the verse 22 is interesting.

It says, 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, as it is written in the law of the Lord. Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy. Now, you can read about this in Leviticus chapter 12. You can get hold of a Bible, and you can read Leviticus chapter 12, and you'll see that Mary and Joseph were doing exactly what the Bible said they should do, exactly what the Word of God had revealed. When Jesus was 40 days old, they brought him up to the temple, and they brought him up for his purification, and they, you know, they were presenting an offering. Friends, sometimes we think it's a bit of a jump to go from the cradle at Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary. Sometimes we think that's a jump. But the reality is, right at the birth of Jesus, right in the early days of his infancy, we see already the shadows of the cross.

We see already the shadows of sacrifice. We see already the shadows of redemption. That word was actually used when the prophetess Anna, you know, was looking on the baby Jesus. We see the shadows of redemption. We even see the shadows of a blood price being paid for the forgiveness of sins in the sacrifice of the two, you know, pigeons or two young doves or whatever it might be. So, we actually see even in the babe in Bethlehem's manger, even in the cradle, we see the shadows of the forthcoming cross.

[12 : 46] Last night, I was singing at a service of carols and readings. I wasn't singing. Sorry, Danny, you'd be better doing that. I was preaching. It worked better that way, right? But I was preaching at a service of carols and readings in the Church of the Holy Rood in Stirling. I don't know if you've ever been there.

It's up beside Stirling Castle, the Church of the Holy Rood. It used to be the parish church of Stirling, and it sits up there beside the castle. It's a medieval church. It's a beautiful building.

It's a stunning building. It's cold, right? Because it's a medieval church, and there's no toilets, right? But it's a beautiful church, and it was packed last night, you know, with the, you know, with the congregation and friends of the congregation who were having this service of carols and readings. And I've got to say to you, it was glorious to sing carols in such a setting.

The building's magnificent. You know, that way, when even I sing, I can sound good, right? You know, that way when you sing out the carols, and the words seem to whisper around the walls. It was kind of like that, you know, as you're singing out the ancient carols, and the words are just whispering around ancient walls in the Church of the Holy Rood. It was stunning. And of course, I'm just caught up in the wonder and the praise to the glory of God in providing us our Savior. I know I've got to go up and preach there. And no pressure, because John Knox preached there, right? You know, and James VI of Scotland was—his coronation took place in there. He was crowned there. But what I wanted to do was lift people's eyes to say, the history of this place does not compare to the revelation of the Creator God in our Lord Jesus Christ. And the one that we are going to think about tonight, it was then, for a little while, it is the one who has always existed. He is the eternal God. He is the eternal

Word of God. And the eternal God and the eternal Word of God, as part of the eternal counsel, the eternal mind, the eternal plan of God, comes to earth that He might redeem, that He might purchase for Himself, those who by faith would put all their trust in Him. Now, in our passage this morning, we meet a man named Simeon. Simeon was a man who believed all the promises of God in the Old Testament.

[15 : 44] Simeon was a man who believed that the covenant God had entered into with His people meant that God would send the Savior. Simeon was a man who'd never lost sight of what God was going to do for mankind. He'd never lost sight of that. It tells us that he was a man who was righteous and devout and full of the Holy Spirit. I'll tell you what, he was a man out of step with His times.

Because God, you know, the Word of God had went silent in Israel for 400 years. The Word of God had not been, you know, clearly proclaimed or spoken. People had lost sight of the promise of God, of the rescuer, of the Savior, of the coming Messiah, but not Simeon.

Simeon knew that every word that God speaks, God does. My friends, we need to know that. Every word God has spoken has come to pass or will come to pass, without exception. So, when God says He's coming, you know, to judge the world and to save the world, He really means what He says, right? We either meet Him as our Savior or we meet Him as our judge. And that's the reality of it. But, you know, every word, and Simeon was a man who believed that. And it says that he was waiting for the consolation of Israel.

That's what he was waiting for. Now, what is the consolation of Israel? Well, let me tell you what it is. He was waiting for all the promises of hope that God had not given up on us, that God had not abandoned us, that God was still for us and not against us. All the promises of hope that God would send a deliverer, that God would send a Savior, that God would make a way for mankind to know and love Him and belong to Him and to celebrate His goodness in their life. Simeon had all the promises of hope wrapped up in His waiting for the consolation of Israel. But here's something else. Simeon was also in that waiting for the consolation of Israel. He was waiting for the day when God would pronounce salvation, good news of great joy for all the world. And what do we sing at Christmas time?

You know, what will we, you know, marvel at this week, next week? We'll marvel at the good news of great joy that will be for all people. That was the angelic announcement. And Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel. He was waiting for the good news of God's salvation. If you fancy a carol service, come over to Calderwood tonight, seven o'clock, carols and readings, and we'll hear the reading, good news of great joy for all the world. And he was waiting for that in the fulfillment, the consolation of Israel. More than that, Simeon understood that this good news of great joy would come at an incredible cost. He actually held in his heart an understanding of the suffering Savior.

[18 : 42] Later on, when he spoke to Mary, the mother of Jesus, he said, and a sword will pierce your own heart also. He actually prophetically looked ahead and said to Mary that, you know, this little one that you're treasuring up, all those things in your heart, that this little one is going to bear the sin of mankind upon himself. This little one is going to walk the way of the suffering servant that we read about in Isaiah 40, which you really get the consolation from. And so the reality is, you know, he knew, he knew that this suffering servant that God had sent into the world was the one who was going to pay the price for this world's sin, for this world's rebellion, for this world's rejection, for this world's waywardness, for this world, and you in life and my life are wrapped up in all of that, being far from God.

And he was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and he knew all of that. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel when it would be Emmanuel, God, with us. He was waiting for that day when God, the Word, would become flesh and make His dwelling among us. That's what Simeon was waiting for.

That's what he was hoping for. That's what he was longing for. That's what by the eyes of faith, Simeon could see. And all those around about him couldn't see it, but Simeon could see it, and he was waiting. And it said that the Holy Spirit, you know, prompted him that he should go up to the temple, and that he should see the Lord Jesus being presented. But there's a beautiful little descriptor in here. It says in verse 26, and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord Christ. Now, every time we read that, we always think Simeon's an old man, right? We always think, most of his visual actors think he was an old man, right? But, you know, the Bible doesn't tell us that. But most of us think Simeon was a kind of old man, you know, doddering along in his stick, waiting for the day when he could shuffle off this mortal coil and, you know, come to what's next. The Bible doesn't tell us that.

He could have been a young man, you know. He could have been a middle-aged man. But the reality is, he was a just man. He was a devout man. He was a righteous man. He believed the promises of God.

The Holy Spirit was indwelling him, and he'd been promised by God that he would not leave this earth until he'd seen the Savior. You know, my friend, I wish that's a promise I could give to all of us.

[21 : 38] But Simeon, Simeon believed the promises of God. And so it tells us that 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, we'll read about that in Leviticus chapter 12, Simeon took him up in his arms, and he blessed God. And he said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation. You know, I said to you before, I'm a grandfather, and papa to five grandchildren. I love my grandchildren. The words that more than any other will get my attention are the words, papa, and I'm there. And there are ten, and there are six, and there's two at three, and there's one at one. And on every occasion, I've had that joy, when just in their infancy, in their early days of childhood, of just holding them, holding them arms, and just blessing them in the name of the Lord our God. Every single one of them, you know, Aaron, Chloe, Sophia, Addison, and little Isla. Every single one of them. What a joy!

What a precious gift from God! What a wonderful life given! And the opportunity just to bless them with thankfulness in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. But Simeon holds the Son of God.

Simeon holds Jesus. Simeon holds the Messiah. Simeon holds the one whose name means Jehovah is salvation.

God rescues. That's who he holds. He holds the creator of the world. He holds the one who, in all his vulnerability, holds everything together. He holds the Christ child in his hands. And he says, my eyes have seen the salvation of our God. You know, my friends, that's my challenge this morning.

In all the midst of the celebrations of Christmas, in all the midst of all that we'll do this week and next week, in particular, next Sunday and Monday morning. Will our declaration be, my eyes have seen the salvation of God. Will that be your declaration? Because that's what Luke was meaning when he said, the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. He was meaning that God was in Christ, in Christ, making it possible for men and women, boys and girls, to have a relationship with himself, to have a friendship with himself, to be reconciled to him, to declare him our Savior, to declare him our Lord. My eyes have seen your salvation. And here's the beautiful thing about it.

[25 : 43] He says, it's a salvation that you have prepared, God. You have prepared it in the presence of the people. So, it's not anything we've done. That's why we give gifts. If any of you wakes up on Christmas morning and you get given a gift and you think, oh, I deserve this, shame on you, right? Shame on you, right? None of us deserve this. But God has prepared the most marvelous gift. You know, the most...even my wife, who ought to merit something for forty years of hard service, still understands, still understands, it's all of grace. It's all of grace.

But God is gracious, my friend, and he's prepared in the presence of all peoples. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ came first to the people of Israel, but he was for the whole world.

He was a light for the Gentiles. The true Israel of God are those who put their faith, who put their trust, who put all their hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. For here is the Lord Jesus Christ, prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, so that from every tribe and tongue and nation we can come and we can be counted amongst the children of God and from the nation of Israel for the glory of your people Israel, they can come. It is all about what we do with Jesus. Everything depends upon what we do with Jesus. Everything depends upon what we believe about Jesus. Do we believe that he is the Son of God and only Savior of the world? Do we repent of our waywardness and our rebellion and our fallenness and our far-from-godness? Do we repent of all of that and put our trust in him? Everything, everything depends upon what we do with Jesus. Well, it's a little wonder that as Simeon was holding Jesus in his hands that Mary and Joseph marveled at everything that was being said about Jesus Christ. He marveled at it. And Simeon continued, and here he became prophetic.

And he said, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel. There are many who will reject their Messiah, and there are many who will rise because of faith in their Messiah, but also for a sign that is opposed. And when you look through the Holy Scriptures, you will discover that everything about the Lord Jesus Christ is a sign pointed to the good news of great joy that all of us can see the love of God for us can see the love of God for us in Christ. And all of us can hear the invitation of God to come to Jesus and repenting and believing in him to make sure that he is our sign, pointing us to the God of all glory and pointing us to all the eternal promises of God that are wrapped up in him. He's a sign. He's not only the sign, he's our Savior. He's our Savior. And, you know, when you look through the gospel account, I did promise, perhaps those of you who don't know Jesus, a little invitation. John's gospel, more than any other, in actual fact, talks about Jesus and talks about, well, they all talk about Jesus, but talks about Jesus as a sign and points, you know, he lifts up seven great signs that are pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ and who he is. And in his life, and in his teaching, and in his miracles, and in his, you know, God becoming man dwelling among us, and in his being lifted up onto Calvary's cross, in his death, and in his resurrection, he's saying, here is God.

Displaying his love, that while we are still sinners, God dies for us. While we are still far from him, God makes it possible for us to draw near to him. While we feel as if we are unworthy, God says, I know you're unworthy, but this is a gift, and you can receive it, for it's for the unworthy.

[30 : 54] And the beautiful thing about the good news of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, it truly is for the whosoever. Whosoever will come, he will not turn away.

And so, if you don't know Jesus, I want to give you two little gifts this morning. One is just a little introduction to John's gospel in this little booklet. And there are 18 verses in there, and there's some little notes that help you to understand it more. And if you want to take that, they're just over there when you're having a coffee, just take that. But the good news about this is, if you read this and think, I'd love to know more about this, Cal is going to set aside time in his diary so that he can meet with you and keep walking you through the whole of John's gospel.

And because Cal's going to do that, the whole congregation's going to rise up and say, we're going to do that as well, right? And we'll walk with you. But here's my other little gift for you this morning. Jeremy, just so that you get a little book from my friend as well. Jeremy, you know, my friend who wrote that other little book, he went through the Bible, the gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he just looked at some of his favorite encounters with Jesus. And he put them into a little book. Simeon's story's in there. So, it was Nicodemuses and the Samaritan woman. I love the story of the Samaritan woman. And, you know, the grieving mother's in there. The rich young man's in there.

The story of the thief is in there. Mary's story is in there. And Thomas's story is in there. And he just wanted to share how it's possible for people like him and people like me and people like you to meet Jesus. And so, it's a great little book that just encourages you to come and to meet Jesus for yourself. And they're over there, and you can take them with you at the coffee time this morning. Simeon gives us that wonderful picture that even as he held that child in his arms, that child that was born, and it had to be so, because God was on the move, making that which is impossible possible. That child who was born in the most unusual circumstances. That child whose birth was all the fulfillment of the promises of God in the Old Testament, all pointing towards the birth of this Christ child. That child who was born homeless. That child who was born in squalor.

That child who was born into a poor family. That child who was king of kings and lord of lords, but who identifies with the lowest of the low. That child. Simeon. Simeon knew that even in his infancy, there was a shadow. It was the shadow of the world. It was the shadow of the perfect Lamb who needed to come to pay the price for our rebellion. And even there in the temple, as his parents fulfilled that which was expected of them, there was the shadow of the cross and of sacrifice and of the price being paid for you and I to be restored to God. Simeon saw it. You know, my friends, we live in the light of it.

[34 : 45] We live in the full blaze of the revelation of God in Christ. And this light is for you and me, a sign that God is for us and not against us. That God has made a way to rescue us.

That as Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel, all the promises of hope that were his in Christ can be ours in Christ. That as Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel, the good news of salvation that was for Simeon is also for us. And we can know it. Simeon saw the suffering servant. And you and I can look upon the suffering servant of Calvary's cross and know the price has been paid. Simeon was longing for God with us. And now the promise of God is that God is with everyone who will repent and believe and proclaim him their Savior. You know, in the Old Testament, the consolation was called the comfort. What comfort there is. What comfort there is for our hearts this Christmas. What comfort there is that in the midst of all the trial and tribulation and uncertainty, there is an unshakable hope.

There is an unshakable promise. There is an unshakable salvation. There is an unshakable God who is with us, making it possible for us to be with him, not just for a moment, but for all eternity. Merry Christmas.

Amen.