

How To Look Forward To 2015

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[0 : 01] Luke chapter 2 verse 21 on page 1028. On the eighth day when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus.

The name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

As it is written in the law of the Lord, every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord 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. 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 upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.

[1 : 26] When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying, The child's father and mother marveled at what had been said about him.

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 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

And a sword will pierce your own soul too. There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was very old.

She had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then was widowed until she was 84. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying.

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. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

[2 : 59] And the child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him. So, I'm going to ask Michael, he's going to come and speak this morning.

Well, nice to be back with you again in Cargilline. Enjoyed a few days over here at Christmas, being well looked after. And now it's time, payback time as I say, but it's nice to be here.

It's the time of the year, isn't it, when we are looking back and remembering what has happened. And we're all looking forward now to the future.

Perhaps, like me, you sent out circular letters. But certainly I'm sure everybody here received presents. And now you can look forward to January, to cold, to dark nights, to water charges.

And some of you may have already said, I hate January. Because there doesn't seem to be too much to look forward to in January. Not like December when we're coming up to Christmas.

[4 : 23] But as Christians we face the new year. And we face that new year which is unknown to us.

And I want us to look at two characters this morning who face the future with great confidence and with a great sense of peace. And I hope that we can learn from them.

They're two old people. It's surprising what you can learn from old people. And here is something to teach us this morning from these older folk.

Simeon, it seems, when we read his story, was reaching the end of his life. For he's now ready to die. He'd been told that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Verse 26. So he's coming towards the end. But he's still following the Lord. And then in verse 37 we have the story of Anna.

[5 : 29] Just a few verses. She's an 84 year old widow. And each of them teach us how to live facing the future.

And I trust it will be a help to us this morning as we look at their two lives of how we are to live in 2015. Now the first thing I think that we need to remind ourselves that we should face 2015 by living a holy life.

It seems that that is something that is essential if we're to enjoy the year that lies ahead. And certainly it's true of Simeon.

It's true also of Anna. That Simeon was living a holy life. We're told in verse 25 that he was righteous and devout.

Now you've all heard the expression, haven't you I'm sure, which says that some people are too heavenly minded to be any earthly use.

[6 : 37] But I would suggest the more heavenly minded we are, the more earthly use we will be. And we find that Simeon is showing his usefulness as he goes into the temple and prophesies regarding the child, the infant Jesus.

And this man's life speaks to us down through the ages. And I would want to say about Simeon that he faced the future by being ready to be different.

He showed that he was different by living this righteous and holy life. Let's remember the times that he was living in.

Times were far from good. There was oppression from the Romans. The religious scene was very bad.

All through the Gospels we read about the scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. People who fastened heavy yokes on the necks of the populace.

[7 : 51] Who altered the law to suit themselves. And it's in a setting like this that this man lived out his life as one who was righteous and devout.

One who was different. Here is a man who walked with God as God would have him walk.

People could say of Simeon that he not only knew God but he showed it by his behaviour in a world that was rotten.

His righteousness was by faith. But his righteousness was also shown by his actions. His religion wasn't skin deep.

It was deeply embedded. He was ready to stand out from the crowd. Ready to be different. And that's how we're to face 2015.

[8 : 59] By being ready to be different. Different to those around and about us. Different in the way that we act.

Different in the way that we communicate. Sometimes even different in the way that we dress. And I don't mean that everybody should put a tie on. Different so that we are marked out as being those who are different.

Different from the crowd. And how was Simeon enabled to live this kind of life? Well it is because he lived his life under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit.

We find reference to him walking in the Spirit in verses 25, 26, verses 27. And in verse 28 he speaks in the power of the Spirit.

Verse 25 says the Holy Spirit was upon him. He wouldn't live to see Pentecost. But like others who lived before him he knew the work of the Holy Spirit in his life.

[10 : 22] On this particular day he would speak as an Old Testament prophet. He didn't know the full story. And he wouldn't know the full story.

But he spoke as he was moved by the Spirit. And I would say to you this morning that true holiness of life can only happen through the working of God's Spirit within us.

Simeon's holiness didn't come by making some New Year resolution as people do at the beginning of a new year.

That so often would end in failure. Simeon, no, walked by the Spirit. He lived by the Spirit.

He was moved by the Spirit. One could say that he was born again of the Spirit of God. And that's where it must begin. If we haven't been born again of the Spirit we will never live a holy life.

[11 : 35] But when there's been that transaction between God and man where God comes down and works in the life of an individual he begins to change.

He begins to lead a sanctified life. He begins to take notice of what the Scripture has to say. He becomes, if you like, a new creation.

Sanctification, of course, isn't passive. It isn't let go and let God. But when God is at work within us we work.

We begin to work out our salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works within us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

So as we face the new year we do not face it in our own strength in our own righteousness but we face the future by the power of the Holy Spirit within us enabling us to live as we ought to live in a world that is rotten.

[12:50] So as we face 2015 let us be ready like Simeon to be different to present our bodies as living sacrifices.

The same could be true of Anna. I think if I would want to put a word over her I would want to say that she was consistent.

Look at verse 37 We have her worshipping we have her fasting and we have her praying.

We are told she never left the temple but worshipped night and day with fasting and with prayer. It was seen that this widow had devoted her life to the service of God.

what she did was for the glory of God. She had right priorities. She sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

[14:00] Now as you look at her life such as it's given to us you may say to me well that's not living in the real world. I have my job I have my home I have my children I have parents to take care of but I would say to you live your life wherever you find yourselves to the glory of God.

Remember that if you're a Christian this morning you're living with God. Your very bodies have become the temple of the Holy Spirit so you're to live your life to the glory of God as Anna did and be consistent in living your life to his glory.

None of us must become Sunday Christians whether we find ourselves in our places of work in our jobs in our homes with unbelievers sometimes whether we're children at school whether we're at university or college whether we have responsibility as parents we're to live to the glory of God consistently again it's the whole idea of being living sacrifices like Anna we're not to miss out on our private worship we're not to miss out on our worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ and we are ready as Christians to give up even that which is legitimate for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ continuous right to the very end of our days Anna was getting towards the end of her days but she wasn't slackening up there's some dear ladies that I knew in the past and sometimes they would say I feel I've done my bit and I would say to them there's still more for you to do than there is whether we're young then or whether we're old we're to be consistent and live for the Lord to the end of our days continually don't slacken off live lives of holiness so be ready to be different beware of worldliness beware that the world doesn't squeeze you into its mold a Christian writer said I looked for the church and I found it in the world and then I looked for the world and I found it in the church let's be careful that we don't become so user friendly that we lose our identity as those who are called to be saints of the living God so as we face 2015 let's hold the challenge of Simeon and Hannah before us and live lives of holiness the second thing that I think we have here is that Simeon and Hannah looked for Christ and looked to Christ if you look at verse 25 you read about

[18:01] Simeon that he was waiting for the consolation of Israel so here was a man who was versed in the Old Testament scriptures he was looking for that comforter he knew what the Old Testament had to say he had the law he had the Psalms he had the prophets they were all there before him and he knew them and he waited for the one that had been promised the seed of the woman that were crushed Satan's head he knew that a promise had been given to Abraham that from the seed of Abraham would come one who would bring a blessing to the nations he knew of David and all that was promised of his seed that one from his family would rule eternally eternally he knew the promises that were given by the prophet

Isaiah that a virgin would conceive and of the increase of his government and peace there would be no end and he knew Psalm 40 what does Psalm 40 say well Psalm 40 Isaiah 40 says this not Psalm 40 Isaiah 40 comfort comfort my people says your God speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed that her sin has been paid for that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins he was looking and waiting for that consolation that comfort that would come and he was looking for the Savior constantly now we live in a later generation we have the fullness of revelation the promises have been fulfilled we believe do we not that

Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God but are we looking for Christ with the same intensity with which Simeon looked are we looking for him to be our comforter in all things no one else can be our comforter as the Lord Jesus can be our comforter do we read the scriptures looking for the Lord Jesus are we thrilled with Christ and all that he is oh dear friends face the coming year looking for comfort in him you see it's so easy to look for comfort in other things in increased opportunity in a better job a better house but only true comfort can come with knowing

Christ and knowing him personally and walking with him day by day to feel the closeness of fellowship with him I like those words of the old Scots preacher who said this I live my life as though Christ died yesterday rose again from the dead today and is coming again tomorrow so I urge you look for Christ in his word look for him in your personal reading look for him in your worship seek to proclaim him to a needy world look for Christ in the law look for Christ in the prophets look for him in the gospels in the epistles in revelation in their place of worship and long to know him more if you look at

Simeon's life you don't get a picture of a man who could take or leave the Christ he longs for Christ verse 26 tells us it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ and moved by the Holy Spirit he goes into the temple with a longing to see Christ and isn't that the task of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ that's his chief task and here is Simeon looking with expectation with anticipation he knew the promised Messiah but he longs to look upon Christ and can you imagine his face as he goes in that particular day and sees in this infant sees this infant in the arms of

[23 : 52] Mary and he recognizes him as the promised one he takes Christ into his arms this devout this righteous one he lays hold of Christ the saviour of the world the promise becomes the reality veiled in flesh the Godhead he sees and he hails the incarnate deity and now he is ready to depart for his eyes have seen the salvation that the Lord had prepared now how can we apply this to ourselves as we enter 2050 well surely it is to live our lives in the light of eternity and we can only do that successfully as we have this same longing for Christ are we then hungering and thirsting for him are we finding our satisfaction in him who loved us and gave himself for us and is coming again for us psalm 42 and verse 1 says as the deer pants for the water so my soul pants for you oh

God can you see that timid creature hiding away through the heat of the day longing that it might go to the water hole to take a sip of water to slack its thirst longing do we have that same kind of longing for Christ to know him better to know him as perhaps we have never known him before the apostle Paul certainly had that longing hear him praying for the Ephesian Christians in chapter 3 of Ephesians in verse 14 he says for this reason I kneel before the father from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives his name I pray that out of the glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being why so that

Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith and I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God is is that your longing for 2015 a longing for Christ William Cowper the hymn writer says this Lord it is my chief complaint that my love is weak and faint yet I love thee and adore oh for grace to love you more so as we face the new year let's live the holy lives that we ought to be living and let's look for

Christ with a longing that we might know him more and more certainly that's what Amma did for we read in verse 38 that she spoke to all of those who looked for redemption in Israel she was looking and she found may we also find him in a way that in 2015 that perhaps we didn't know him in 2014 and there's one thing further I want to say before I sit down as we face the new year as we face it let's look beyond our personal boundaries we live in a sinful world and it was a sinful world that Christ came into the world to save and

Simeon knew this hear him speak in verses 30 to 32 for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel it's a remarkable statement isn't it let's remember who's making the statement he's a Jew and the average Jew would have looked down his nose at the Gentile nations but there's no prejudice with this man here he announces the good news that in this child was salvation for all who would believe for Jew and for Gentile Gentile eyes would be open and blessing would come to the Jews what faith as he holds a scrap of humanity in his arms this fragile infant he sees salvation for a lost world and he looks out and sees salvation for that world isn't it the tendency of us all to look in

to be concerned about our own problems to be concerned with the water charges etc etc instead of focusing our eyes beyond our personal boundaries to

[30 : 23] Christ for the nations see Anna coming at that very moment she gives thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who are looking forward to redemption of Israel John Wesley penned the lines happy if with my latest breath I might but gasp his name preach him that is Christ to all and cry in death behold behold the lamb Christ for Syria Christ for those who are suffering and going through so much in Nigeria salvation for North Korea for Ukraine for Israel salvation for our neighbors and families salvation to be found in Christ look beyond that

Christ might be known to the nations that people might be brought face to face with Christ and here Simeon this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel verse 34 and to be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed don't concentrate on yourself but concentrate on him and making him known what will happen as people are brought face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ well there will be a division that takes place some will reject him some by grace will turn to him there will be rejection or acceptance but we're to point to him he is the sign who points the way to life some will reject the sign and call for his crucifixion others will see that

Jesus is indeed salvation for a lost world so as we face the new year yes live those lives of holiness let's be ready to be different let's be consistent let's look to the Lord Jesus Christ let's long after him let's be whole hearted in our devotion and let's look away from ourselves that we might make the saviour known to the nations that they might be brought like Simeon to be face to face with the Lord Jesus is not our responsibility if people reject but it is our responsibility if we don't make him known but as we make him known some will accept is there a cost involved in all of this yes there is if you live differently in a world of so much sin if you live differently in your street in your home in your place of work in your school in your university your college wherever you find yourself there will be a cost remember what was said to

Mary by Simeon a sword will pierce your own soul too I know they were words that were specific to her she would see her son die upon the cross of Calvary and what went through her mind at that time must have been awful it wouldn't have been easy to watch her son dying on the cross but it's a reminder to us all that if we follow the Lord Jesus there will always be a cost to true discipleship but God grant that we will be ready to take up our cross and follow him who first loved us and gave himself for us so that we're no longer our own but his purchased with his precious blood

God grant us the grace that we will be whole hearted in our devotion during 2015 let's pray together oh father we thank you for Simeon we thank you for Anna these old folks who lived their lives as they should have that we all should live help us oh father we pray by the power of your holy spirit to be as they were and help us to see oh lord that we have so much more to go on than they did for we have the fullness of revelation we have seen the death of the lord jesus we have seen his resurrection we have seen his ascension on high we have the epistles we have the book of revelation that reminds us of the life that is to come oh father knowing all of this as well as those old testament scriptures may may may may we be so well burst in them may we so take them to our hearts that we might be enabled to live as we ought to live in 2050 lord we love you and adore oh for grace to love you more amen we're going to stand together as we sing our song we rest on thee our shield and our defender as we go into the year that's ahead we go strong in his strength and safe in his keeping tender let's stand together as we sing our shield and our defender we will not fall alone again alone strong in thy strength in thy keeping tender we rest from thee and in thy name we [38 : 24] All east in thy name ahead Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. One more. One more. One more.

One more. Please do take your seats. As we close one year and begin another year, a good place to do that is together around the Lord's table.

And thinking of what we've looked at this morning, to live a holy life, it is Christ is the one who has called us, the one who has made us holy through his own death on the cross.

[41 : 54] If we want to see Christ in all his goodness, if we want to look to Christ, then we look to this meal as a reminder of who he is and what he has done.

And to look beyond the boundaries, this is a meal that reminds us that Christ came for the salvation of the whole world. So let's share in this meal together for all those who love the Lord Jesus, for those who know him, who trust in him, to take part in this meal, to come to ask for his forgiveness

afresh, and to know his goodness and forgiveness in our lives.

Let's look to him as the one who loves us and gave his life for us. So let's share in this meal together. As the bread is being passed around, we will eat it together, take a piece, and then we will eat together.

But in the time, in the quietness, let's bring our own confession to the Lord and ask for his forgiveness afresh. Let's do it together.

Let's do it together. Let's do it.

[43 : 42] Let's do it together. Let's do it together.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[45 : 55] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[47 : 55] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.