

Jesus Comfort For All People - Luke Ch2:22-40

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[0 : 00] We're going to look up together Luke chapter 2 and starting at verse 22. Let's hear God's word to us.

When the time came for the purification rites required by the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him, that's Jesus, 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 on him.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.

[1 : 25] 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, Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

The child's father and mother marveled at what was 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 prophet, Anna, the daughter of Phenuel of the tribe of Asher.

She was very old. She had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then was a widow 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.

[3 : 11] And the child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was on him. Amen.

Jonathan, thank you. Let's pray again for ourselves and for Jonathan.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it is true, that we can trust it. And we pray that the grace of God would be upon us.

And the Holy Spirit who is active in Simeon's life and Anna's life, that same Spirit would be active and at work in our lives right now, through Jonathan, as he brings your word to us.

Bless us all. In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Johnny. If you could keep your Bibles open as we will be dipping in and out of the passage.

[4 : 27] It's a rather long passage, but a very encouraging passage. We'll start off with a question. What are you waiting for? What are you waiting for?

If you could think of one thing that you were looking forward to, one thing that you really wanted to happen, perhaps in the next week, the next month, or before you pass from life, what would it be? If you ask that question to people of different ages, you'll probably get a different answer.

You talk to somebody who's really small and ask them what they're looking forward to, what are they waiting for, they'll say, I'm waiting to be bigger, to be older. Or as people grow up and you ask them, what are you waiting for?

They'll say, I'm waiting for somebody to marry, or I'm waiting for a child to be born. If you think about it, we wait for a lot of things. Some things are quite trivial. We wait for the kettle to boil.

Apparently, we spend four months of our lifetime waiting for the kettle to boil. But we can wait for something more serious as well. We might be very ill and sick.

[5 : 28] It might be a long-term sickness. And we're waiting for a relief of that, waiting for that pain and suffering to end. But we wait a lot. This morning, we're going to meet two people who are also waiting, and not just two people in particular, a whole nation who are waiting for something to happen.

This morning, we're going to meet Simeon and Anna. We're going to meet them in the temple. Both of them are older, and both of them are waiting for the promises of God to be fulfilled.

And they're going to do something quite amazing in our passage. But they are going to recognize Jesus. Our passage is toward the end of the book of Luke.

We've been reading that a lot for the last few weeks, haven't we, in our Christmas services. For Luke details a lot of the early life of Jesus. And if you want to sum up the first two chapters of Luke, it would be the arrival of Jesus into the world and the fulfillment of those promises.

And we're going to meet up with Jesus as they make the five-mile trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Take a look at verse 22 onwards.

[6 : 44] 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. Notice the number of times it's going to speak about the law of Moses or the law of the Lord.

As it is, verse 23, 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.

We read a lot of things that perhaps are alien to us. A time of purification, sacrifice, fulfilling the law of the Lord. The Israelites had specific instructions.

When a child, when a boy was born, the mother had to wait for seven days while she was unclean. They then would circumcise the child and then wait another 33 days to present him to the Lord and offer sacrifices.

In addition, as Jesus was the firstborn child, he would be presented to the Lord for all the firstborn of all livestock and people belong to the Lord. What we can take from this is that Luke is very keen to emphasize that Jesus' parents fulfilled the law of the Lord.

[8 : 02] And if we're unsure as to what that's what he wanted, take a look at verse 27. He says, In the middle of it, when the parents brought in the child to do for him what the custom of the law required, Luke was keen to make sure that we knew that Jesus' parents had followed the law.

And in case we missed it, take a look at verse 39 and 40. Verse 39, When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

So Jesus was going to be brought up in a household where God's commandments are followed. But God was also going to use their obedience to ordain events so that he would meet Simeon and Anna in the temple on that very day.

Verse 25, Here we're going to meet Simeon who's been faithfully waiting for God's promises. Note what Luke says about Simeon. 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 or the Lord's Messiah.

[9 : 25] Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child to do for them what was required of the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God.

Simeon is described as righteous. He was good. He followed the commands of God. God is described in Scripture as being righteous. Everything God does is good.

All his actions, all his decisions are morally correct. And we see Simeon as a servant of God representing those characteristics of God.

But he was also devout. He was dedicated to God. Do you notice how many times it referred to the Spirit? Simeon had the Holy Spirit upon him. Look at verse 25.

The Holy Spirit was upon him. Verse 26, He had a revelation of the Holy Spirit. And verse 27, Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.

[10:22] Here was a man with the Holy Spirit was upon him. He had a revelation, a special promise that God had given him. But he was also led by the Spirit. But note that Simeon was also waiting.

He was also waiting. In verse 25, it describes him as waiting for the consolation of Israel. And that word waiting is in the sense of waiting for something that he is looking forward to, something favorable.

We can wait for many things, but often we can wait for things that might cause us anxiety or stress, something that we really don't want to happen. But Simeon was waiting for something that he was looking ahead to.

And what he was waiting for was the consolation of Israel. You might have picked it up from one of the songs we sang just now. Consolation of Israel. What was that? Well, the word consolation, we might use the word comfort.

And the actual meaning of that, the Greek word meaning for it is paraklesis, to call near or to draw alongside. We can understand that concept of comfort, can't we?

[11:29] When we are anxious or when things aren't going well in our lives, when we need something or someone to help us through whatever we're going through, we want to call them near, don't we?

We want someone or something to draw alongside, to help us through so that we are comforted. Simeon was obviously looking for comfort.

Think about who Simeon was in the time he lived in. Simeon was an Israelite. The Israelites were a people blessed by God. They'd been given great promises of God.

They were told that they would be blessed. They would become numerous people, that God would be their God. But the Israelites sinned, didn't they? And if you read the history of Israel, you will see that time and time again, they sinned.

They disobeyed God. They turned their backs on God. God had sent them into exile. He had brought them back. But that relationship was broken. Their sin was separating them from God.

[12:33] When Simeon is looking for consolation of Israel, he's looking for comfort. But he's not looking for comfort, thinking, yes, surely God is going to do this because God is good. He could rely on promises that were in God's word.

He was righteous and devout. He was in the temple. He'd have heard the scriptures being read out. Listen to these words from Isaiah, chapter 40, 1 and 2. It echoes that comfort that Simeon is looking for.

They read, 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 had been paid for, that she has received double from the Lord's hand for her sins.

God was calling for comfort for his people. Isaiah was talking to them before they went into exile. And in a sense, that promise was partially fulfilled.

They'd come back. They were partially comforted. But they didn't have full comfort. And people like Simeon, people like others, were waiting for comfort to come into the world. But Simeon wasn't the only one who was looking for comfort.

[13:45] Take a look at Anna, verse 36. Anna was described as a prophetess. And she was very old. And she lived in the temple night and day, fasting and praying.

Another servant of God who was totally dedicated to the Lord. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking for comfort. forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. It wasn't just Simeon. It wasn't just Anna. But all of these people were looking forward to the redemption of God. Redemption being a deliverance, a rescuer. They were looking for these. And if we had the time, we could go through the Old Testament and look at all of the promises of God, of a Messiah, of a comforter to come into the world.

As a teacher of Sunday school, a great privilege each week to teach the children about Jesus. For the last year and a half, we have been going through the Old Testament. And it's been amazing to see the connection in the Old Testament to Jesus as we see promises of a Messiah to come, a comforter, someone to console.

[14 : 57] And we are about to see those promises to be fulfilled. But Simeon had a special promise as well, didn't he?

Even though all of these people were waiting for Jesus, Simeon had a special one of the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 26. He was promised that it had been that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ, or the Messiah.

He had this special promise. So can you imagine, Simeon, the expectation he had that every morning he woke up, he was still alive, meaning he didn't see the Lord's Christ, and he was about to.

And we see that this very day that he was going to meet with Jesus. Can you imagine being led by the Spirit as he walked to the temple that day, each step getting closer to meeting with Jesus? We pick it up in verse 28. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praising God, saying, Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

[16 : 08] 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 the glory of your people, Israel.

For my eyes have seen your salvation. Isn't that an incredible verse? All the expectation of all the years, all of the Old Testament promises coming together as he took Jesus in his arms and he could say, My eyes have seen your salvation.

Simeon was holding a baby, a newborn baby, less than 40 days old. And yet, with the eyes of faith, he could see that this baby was God's chosen way of saving his people.

We've just spent a lovely time in Christmas. We've had Christmas celebrations. We've had lovely times and carol services. Perhaps we've been to nativity plays and seen the story of Jesus acting out.

Not many people will have recognized Jesus in that. But Simeon recognized Jesus. But not only him. Look again at Anna.

[17 : 22] When Anna met with Jesus, she said she praised God. We're not told what Anna said, but she gave thanks to God. With a grateful heart, she saw who Jesus was.

And you see, Simeon and Anna did something that many people in Jesus' time didn't do. And they did something that many people in today's world do not do.

And that was, they recognized Jesus. Do you recognize Jesus? When you pick up God's word and you see the name of Jesus in print, do you recognize who he truly is?

That he is the one that was promised? That he was the one that the Old Testament spoke of would come into the world? Do you recognize him as the one who is your savior?

The one who would pay the penalty for your sins? Do you remember when you first recognized Jesus? I remember when I first recognized Jesus. When I first time that I came to realize who Jesus was, I'd spent perhaps 18 months hanging around Christians.

[18 : 25] I enjoyed their company. I enjoyed their food. I enjoyed spending time in Bible studies. I was learning about God and learning about Jesus. But I use the word learning about very deliberately.

You see, I was learning about Jesus and all these great facts, but they were all up here. Until one day, we were in a Bible study and we were reading Romans.

And the verse that I came across was, for the wages of sin is death. Being an accountant, I could understand wages. You get wages for something that you are due, that you worked for them.

And all of a sudden, it hit me. I was due death, separation, punishment, hell, because of my sin. And for about two weeks, I fought against that.

I did not want to consider myself a sinner. Yet I knew in my head that Jesus came to save me from my sins. About two weeks later, at a Bible study, somebody pointed out to me that there was a second half to that verse.

[19 : 32] For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It was then that I recognized Jesus. Simeon and Anna could recognize him.

They could see that he was the one that was promised. The Old Testament had promised him. Now I was able to do that because I could see that my sins were forgiven, that I did not have to pay the penalty for my sins because I recognized who Jesus was.

Yeah, but did Simeon not say that the Messiah was going to be the consolation of Israel? How then was I going to be saved? After all, I'm not a Jew, and I'm pretty sure none of the rest of us are either.

Look at what else Simeon said about Jesus. Verse 31, speaking of Jesus as salvation, he says, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of your people Israel.

God had prepared salvation in the sight of all people. It wasn't hidden. It wasn't something that was going to be for a small select group of people. It was going to be for all people.

[20 : 45] Israelites are Gentiles, Gentiles being those who are not Jews. Jesus also described as a light, a light for revelation to the Gentiles.

Does that sound familiar? Jesus being a light. Think of these words again from Isaiah, prophesying what would happen in Isaiah 49. He said, Is it too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept?

I will also make you a light to the Gentiles that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Isaiah was talking about a servant of the Lord.

People didn't know who the servant was. There was a lot of confusion, but they knew a servant of the Lord was coming and he was coming in the form of Jesus Christ.

You see, salvation comes through Jesus and that salvation was not going to be just for the people of Israel, but for the people to the ends of the world, the ends of the earth.

[21 : 50] But as that salvation goes out to the end of the world, not everyone is going to recognize Jesus. Look at what Simeon says in particular to Mary.

Verse 33. The child's father and mother marveled at what was said to them. 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 heart, your own soul too.

Note that Simeon is speaking directly to Mary, not to Joseph, to Mary. And he speaks to Mary that Jesus is going to be a sign that will be opposed, a sign that will be spoken against.

We mightn't like to think of that over Christmas, mightn't we? We enjoy Christmas. We enjoy going to the carol services. We enjoy everything to do with the presents. But Jesus didn't remain a baby, did he?

Verse 40 reminds us that the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. And as Jesus went through his life, he was opposed, wasn't he?

[23 : 11] Not everyone accepted who Jesus was. There was many people gathered around Jesus. They enjoyed him for a while, and as Jesus taught them different things, they fell away.

And the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, they opposed him. They even were coming up with plans to kill him. Isaiah was prophesying to Mary that, yes, this is going to happen to your son.

Listen to these words again from Isaiah. Let's look forward to this servant that would come. Isaiah 53, verse 3. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering and familiar with pain, like one from whom people hide their faces.

He was despised, and we held him in low esteem. And Jesus spoke about that rejection. He knew that he was going to be rejected by people as he went from being a baby back toward Jerusalem to the cross.

He told his disciples in Luke 9, the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

[24 : 26] But notice also what he says to Mary. He says, A sword will pierce your own soul too. Mary was a new mother. She had a newborn baby in front of her, and yet Simeon was saying, A sword will pierce your soul too.

Jesus was no ordinary baby, and Mary, when it comes down to it, was no ordinary mother. Mary would suffer also. She would see the rejection and the suffering of her son.

We see Mary and Jesus together in Jerusalem here, and just over 30 years after this, we see them again in Jerusalem, don't we? But this time, Jesus will be hanging on a cross for your sins and my sins, and Mary will be watching.

Look at how John describes it. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother. Mary was going to live to see her son rejected, a sword was going to pierce her heart too.

The question for us is, when we see this, when we see that Jesus is going to be rejected by men, what do we do with Jesus? How do we respond to Jesus?

[25 : 39] Are we going to be people who believe in Jesus, believe that he died for our sins and rose again? Or are we going to reject Jesus?

It's a serious question, isn't it? Perhaps a quick question, we might say, well, that's not really for Christmas. But this story reminds us that Jesus coming into the world was not so that we could have a lovely time at Christmas, and even though we do, but Jesus came with a specific mission, and that mission was to save his people.

The hint is in his name, to save his people from their sins. But note what else Simeon says. He said, verse 35, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. Our hearts are very important when it comes to salvation. God knows our hearts.

We cannot hide things from him. Listen to what Paul said to the Romans. If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart, God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [26 : 51] For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. God knows all of our hearts.

We can hide things from each other, can't we? None of us can see one another's hearts. And we will meet people who perhaps profess to be Christians, but God knows.

But what each of us needs to do is, are we following Jesus? God will know. We can fool one another. If we are rejecting Jesus, if we're not truly Jesuses, there is still hope.

Listen to these words from Peter. He was speaking to a big group of people after Jesus had ascended, and he said, Repent then and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Repent, turning away from sin, that your sins may be wiped out. That offer is still open. Even if you are here rejecting Jesus, the offer of salvation is still there.

[28 : 01] The offer is for refreshment. We look for that, don't we? We long for comfort and refreshment, and if we are believing in Jesus, we have that comfort. We have the comfort knowing that our sins are forgiven.

Simeon was looking for that comfort when he was talking about the consolation of Israel. And for us now, as we read this passage, as believers, we can take comfort that God fulfills his promises.

Do you notice we read three verses from Isaiah? All of those came true in Jesus. And as we go into 2020, we can trust that God fulfills his promises.

He made promises to his people. Simeon, Anna, and others were faithfully waiting for those promises to be fulfilled. And then Jesus appeared. We see Simeon.

He'd received God's salvation, didn't he? After he had seen Jesus, he said, you can now dismiss me in peace. He'd received the goal of salvation.

[29 : 11] He had seen Jesus. We haven't seen Jesus yet, have we? As believers, we know that our salvation is secure, for there's no power or authority can take us out of the Lord's hands.

But we have not seen Jesus yet. We've seen him in the words of Scripture, but we haven't seen him face to face. So in a sense, we're still waiting for the promises of God, aren't we? And God gives us great promises.

Listen to what Paul wrote to the Philippians. He said, But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our citizenship is in heaven. We're here for a temporary time only, and we eagerly await, we're still waiting, aren't we, for a saviour to come.

And when Jesus comes, he will take each one of us, as if we are believers. What a wonderful promise that we have. And think of all the promises that flow from that.

[30 : 17] When we pass from this life, we have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. A few weeks ago, when Dan was preaching, he was preaching from 1 Peter.

And in the very first chapter, there's wonderful verses that speak of the confidence we can have when we pass from this life. Listen to these words from 1 Peter chapter 1.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

We're still waiting. We're waiting for Jesus to come, but we can be sure he will come. And even though we live in a life, in a world, that there seems to be so much sorrow and so much pain and

suffering, when we go to be with the Lord in heaven, the new heavens and the new earth, there will be no more pain, no more tears.

[31 : 31] He will wipe every tear from our eyes, but the old daughter will have passed away and the new one will have come. We can bring those promises to other people.

Do you notice how Anna, when she saw the baby, her desire was to speak to others? We can bring that comfort to others. You see, there's many people in our families, many people that we work with, our friends, who will have enjoyed Christmas, who will have seen Jesus, but will be happy to leave Jesus in that manger and pick him up again next Christmas.

But we can share the hope that we have with those around us. And as we go into 2020, we can rely on the promises of God, that one promise of God will ever be broken.

Here's a challenge for us. As we pick up God's word in the next few months, in the next year, and we see a promise of God, take a note of it. Perhaps put a little P in your Bible for promise.

And when you're going through a tough time in the year, when you're suffering, or life seems to be just that little bit too hard, or you begin to doubt God, pick up the Bible, look at the promises that you've listed, and trust God to fulfill those promises, and that when we pass from this life, we have a wonderful inheritance.

[33 : 02] Jesus might come back in the next 12 months, and how glorious that will be, but when we see Jesus, we will be able to say, as Simeon did, my eyes have seen your salvation.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this wonderful piece of scripture. What joy, what excitement there must have been when Simeon saw you, Lord, as a baby, and said, my eyes have seen your salvation.

I thank you that all the promises of the Old Testament were coming true, and that the promised Messiah, the promised one, came, and they recognize you, Lord, as the one who could save them from their sin, and we too have that promise, and we want to thank you for that.

And as we head into the next year, we can be confident that you will continue to uphold all your promises, for, Father, you do not break any of your promises. We look forward to you coming again, Lord.

We look forward to an inheritance that can never perish or spoil or fade, and we think of those that we know and we love who are rejecting you. Might indeed we have that desire to bring that comfort to them, to share you with those around, being confident in your word and your promises.

[34 : 25] in Jesus' name, Amen.