

Luke 2:22–35

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[0 : 0 0] Again, that's Luke 2, 22 to 35. Please stand for the reading of God's word. And when the time came for their purification, according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him.

And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

[1 : 1 6] And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed.

And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that the thoughts of many from many hearts may be revealed. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

You may be seated. Well, good morning. What a joy to see you here today.

So glad and wonderful to see even some friends who have come in from out of town, family that has returned. What a joyful day.

You know, it's been 94 consecutive Sundays since we left Ray School. We have endured 62 consecutive Sundays where we were a Zoom-only congregation.

[2 : 2 2] Today we conclude 33 consecutive weeks where we have met out of doors, only one of which we had to orchestrate around weather.

And as I look at you this morning here in our midst, you are warriors. You are treasured possessions.

I am so grateful for this congregation. And today we finish. We fulfill something that we never could have imagined.

We will move this Friday from this gravel across the street. We will move in. And we will work our way up and out of the lower level.

And we are grateful to God for that. And I am grateful to God for you as a church family who came together taking vows of membership virtually.

[3 : 3 2] And I look forward to early January when our church family that's away for the holidays, all is back together and we see the Lord work in our midst.

But this is a significant day. So take a good look around. With the Lord's grace, you won't have to do this again.

But this will be a day and these will be weeks that your heart will treasure as time goes on. There will be stories that you will tell of an emerging church family that came forth literally from gravel to what the Lord had called her to do from that building.

Even this week, we've seen, and I know I haven't started preaching yet. We saw another significant answer to prayer this week in regard to the financial resources needed to do what we considered God had asked us to do in the first phase of that building.

Just this week, there was a significant gift given that will enable this gravel parking lot to one day be paid. That will enable the stained glass windows on either side of the building to be completed.

[4 : 57] That will enable our kitchen to be more fully furnished than it might have been. That will enable the outsourcing of work that will expand the space that's presentable to us.

It is a significant week. It's really the conclusion of so many things. It's not the end.

It's the end of the beginning. And this then is the word, the text that we have before us under God's orchestration to be heard for our family this week.

Next Sunday morning, Milton Taylor will be preaching and I love it. We'll be returning to the songs of ascent to finish the two that yet remain.

Psalms 133 and then we'll open next year with Psalm 134. But take a look at Psalm 133. The first message that God will give us as we walk into that space next Sunday morning.

[6 : 00] How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity. That's the word we'll come in on. Now, of course, there'll be an angelic-like celebration this Christmas Eve, Friday night at five.

And I encourage you to invite your friends if you're in town. We won't be streaming that, but we will be again on Zoom for a bit for those beginning next Sunday again.

But I stand in awe today of what the Lord has done, what he is doing, and what he intends to do. And I am thoroughly convinced that we follow him and we have watched him supply every need for the world.

But most especially you. He has great things in store. And I am your grateful pastor for the way you have weathered, literally weathered, 94 weeks of displacement, 62 weeks of isolation, 33 weeks of meeting in a field or on stone.

Praise the Lord. This is a sight I love to see. That's why I encourage you to look around. I'm grateful that I'll hopefully never have to see it again.

[7 : 30] But this is a treasure moment. This week we celebrate Christmas.

I'm now moving to a sermon. And so on this morning of all Sunday mornings, it's worth asking, what's the big deal?

Why all the fuss? And who can I get to explain to me why it matters? In other words, the questions that are capturing the thoughts of our heart.

Well, how about a young married couple who happened to run across a couple of elderly persons? How about that to answer our questions?

How about Mary and Joseph who come alongside Simeon and Anna? How about a young couple carrying a couple of turtle doves into the temple where they meet two old birds who seem to have been waiting for their arrival?

[8 : 40] Yeah, how about it? How about this scene to answer the questions that reveal the thoughts of our heart?

What is the big deal about Christmas? Why all the fuss? And who will explain to me why it should matter? Look at the text this morning.

There is something this young couple does from 22 to 24. There is something this aged pairing of elderly person says in 25 and following that will reveal to us why Christmas is a big deal.

Why the day matters. And there's a phrase that I think connects both scenes with one another. Both what the young couple does and the couple of elderly persons say and it's this the wait is over.

The wait is over. Take a look at the young couple and let's see what they did because for them they have been waiting to do something that now comes to fruition shortly after the birth of Christ.

[10:02] Verse 22 again and when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses they brought him that is their infant child Jesus 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 to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

The young couple does something for them the wait in the text was in regard to something that mattered in accordance with the law.

You notice that in the reading. They are bringing their first born son and there are quotations in those verses that go back to Exodus 12 about the first born being holy and because Israel's first born children were to come to be presented as holy and circumcised on the eighth day those that were males it was in reflection upon God who had redeemed them from Egypt at the cost of Egypt's first born son.

In other words God's salvation come to them was a consequence of the lives given at the time of the deliverance and so since their salvation came at the cost of human life they brought the first born of their own lives to the Lord as holy that they would ever remember there's nothing presumptive about what God has done in saving his people and so he came on the eighth day and was circumcised and then Mary according to Leviticus 12 would wait until 33 days beyond that to bring their child and offer an offering if you were wealthy you might be able to bring a lot but if you were poor it says you only needed to bring a couple of turtle doves or a couple of pigeons and the text here indicates that Mary and Joseph were people socioeconomically without a lot of means and yet they were walking in accordance with the law for them the wait was over they brought their child into the family of God they consecrated them to him to the Lord she made her offerings of purification and we ought to take from this simply that every parent every hour of the day ought to feel that next to making their own calling and election sure that they are to raise their children in accordance with all that they understand the word of God to be oh that there would be many hundreds upon hundreds of young couples that emerge in our midst over the coming years who are living as though the wait is over and they are walking out their lives in accordance with the

Lord raising their children in the nurture and instruction of him but even more than that I think Luke has something to say about this for all of us parents or not the credibility of the Christian message according to Luke is rising because of what this young couple is doing notice the whole bracket of the text of our story verse 22 it's something according to the law of Moses or even later in verse 39 and when they had returned having performed everything and according to the law they are doing the whole scene is bracketed in their observance according to the law which means that for Luke's readers who are wondering is the Christian message viable is it credible all they had at this moment was Mark's gospel where Jesus appears on the scene at the age of 30 being baptized and entering into ministry but where did he come from and is he legitimate and what

[14 : 34] Luke is saying among all the gospel writers I'm collecting infant narrative stories to demonstrate to you the credibility of the whole person of Jesus he doesn't emerge in the world at age 30 no he emerges as an infant he emerges as an answer to prayer he emerges as a family who's living in accordance with the law all these things according to Luke are elevating the credibility of the message that Jesus doesn't come out of thin air he comes as the fulfillment as the holy one of Israel the first born son among whom his parents even raised him in accordance with the law if you're not a Christian today this scene is meant to make you realize Jesus is the fulfillment of all that history well they're not the only two in the text for whom the wait for something was over the young couple with two turtle doves meets really a couple of old birds and I'm referring to

Simeon and Anna they seem to have entered into this looking for something greater than simply law keeping what can we learn from them and what they say about the meaning of Christmas well the wait for them and for Israel is over for Simeon and Anna the wait over the time of the consolation of Israel is done take a look at verse 25 what was it that Simeon was waiting for he had been waiting for the consolation of Israel well that's over now look at what Anna says at the very end verse 38 and 9 coming at that hour she began to give thanks and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem they were waiting for the consolation of Israel the redemption of Jerusalem they were waiting for

God to fulfill his promises as put forward in Isaiah 40 that the time of your payment is finished that the time of comfort has come comfort comfort oh my people I will now give them double means of grace for all the double that has come to them for their sin and so all of a sudden salvation is here redemption is here they have been waiting for it the time of forgiveness is at hand the ancient promises of God are fulfilled while the young couple comes in accordance with the law the old couple recognizes that the consolation of Israel is now fulfilled which was promised in the law it isn't just the law that's being worked out in this text it's the prophetic voice that is being worked out in this text and on both accounts it's done it's complete we're not waiting on the Lord here today he's here and the story tells of Simeon coming you can see that there of taking him up in his arms and then of speaking he's going to speak two times put your eyes on the text he speaks once words of blessing to God and then he speaks words of blessing to the couple but especially to Mary what does he say to God verse 29 well he speaks clearly of the weight being over his own weight

Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word God's word to him had been fulfilled that's what he says to God I bless you for fulfilling your word to me but he says more than that verses 30 and 31 he speaks of salvation as having come he says for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all the peoples that in Jesus God's salvation is here he hasn't just fulfilled a word to Simeon he's brought salvation to his people and notice that little phrase in the presence of all the people this is a public thing this isn't privatized spiritualized notions on religion this is done in public that can be proclaimed to the world with credible force so he says you fulfilled your word to me you brought salvation to your people and then finally he goes on and actually says he speaks of it not just for Israel but for all look at verses 32 especially a light for revelation to the

Gentiles and for glory to your people of Israel carrying in the prophetic word of Isaiah 42 that when the light of God entered into the world it would not merely be for Israel but it would be expanded for everyone and that's what Simeon is saying he is blessing God if you want to know the reason Christmas matters if you want to know why it's significant if you want to know according to this old man in the text why it's a big deal it's a big deal because in Jesus God's promised salvation has arrived and it's a fulfillment of that which was necessary for Israel and if God did not fulfill his word to Israel there was no hope for him fulfilling a word to the!

[20 : 42] takes Jesus into his arms he lifts this infant child into the air and he offers a prayer to God basically saying the wait is over done completed fulfilled even all of that language in Isaiah 9 about a light for the revelation to the Gentiles about the infant upon whom the government of God would be set all of those texts are what you prepare to celebrate this week the wait is over for Mary and Joseph in accordance with the law the wait is over for Simeon and Anna on the consolation of Israel the wait is over and I'm closing for you and for me the wait is over this is the day of salvation the time for you to embrace

Jesus for the salvation of your life from the sin of your own heart is here in Jesus you will have a light that will penetrate the very thoughts of your heart I told you that Simeon said two things he said something to God but he said something to the parents and especially to Mary and it's to that second saying that I want you to look as we consider the implication of this message for us verse 33 and his father and his mother marveled at what said about him and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother behold this child is appointed for the fallen rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed and the sword will pierce through your own soul as well so that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed in

Jesus you not only have the light of the world you have a light that will penetrate the thoughts of your very heart remember how we opened the message what are the questions that emerge from the thoughts of our own heart why is this a big deal what's all the fuss about why should it matter in Jesus it is now going to reveal upon your own soul those thoughts in regard to what you will make of him the wait is over and your response to Christmas your response to what I have said will reveal the thought of your own heart and upon that will hinge the salvation of your own soul so I would say on this

Christmas Sunday get hold of the Christ child for yourself take Take up this infant in your arms as the finished work of God and bless God for him don't miss the significance of Christmas Christmas the significance of Christmas is that the end of all things is at hand the significance of Christmas is that the day has finally come these truths we've learned this morning from a young couple these truths we learn from a couple of elderly saints in the text and this Christmas if you're celebrating with little ones around or you can certainly envision it if you're not you can learn this lesson from them even on Friday and Saturday because kids get this much about Christmas what do kids get that adults with experience miss

I'll tell you what kids get the wait is over in a word picture they have been looking at gifts under trees or waiting for people to arrive from out of town and on Christmas they're here and this stuff gets open see this this is this is it the time has come the days are fulfilled my time of waiting is finished and ironically adults always miss this about Christmas we always tend to think that Christmas is about the beginning of something that's going to be finished much later it's a birth it's an arrival but it's never an end it's nothing final even our church calendar suggests this misunderstanding to our minds the first day of Advent is the first Sunday of the church year it ought to be the first day of Advent ought to be the day that signals the calendar's final climactic season has begun because Jesus has now arrived after all those hundreds and thousands of years of waiting that's what I want you to go home with this morning

[26 : 19] Christmas is a big deal because it signifies that the wait is over Christmas matters because your salvation has come your opportunity to have peace with God rests with your response to Jesus well Merry Christmas to you all our heavenly father we thank you for this text and this young couple who teach us to continue to learn to walk in accordance with your word we thank you for these these two Simeon and Anna this elderly couple in the text thank you that through what they say you are to be blessed and our hearts can be warmed we thank you for children in our midst who understand the end of all things which commences this week

Lord I pray for each one under the hearing of my voice that their response to Jesus which reveals the thoughts of their hearts would be to receive him still and therein may you enter in Jesus name we pray amen