

Return of the King

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Preacher: Paul Dudley

[0 : 00] This is the Christmas Eve service at Holy Trinity on the 24th of December 2003.

The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled Return of the King and is based on Luke chapter 2 verses 25 to 35.

Please be seated. It has occurred to me that a great place to notice arrivals is at the airport. It's a great place just to sit there and watch friends meet each other from when they've come overseas. They come up and they give their big handshakes or it might be a hug.

And then there are those who are lovers, who have been separated by time and space and they meet in a great embrace and they are completely oblivious to all that is going around them.

[1 : 10] You could probably even take their bags I imagine, you know, they're just so oblivious to what's going on. Little kids seeing their parents after a long trip away or meeting grandparents for the first time.

Moments of great emotion, of great passion, time of great arrivals. But if you want to see one of the great arrivals this year, then you won't see it in the arrival lounge at Melbourne.

You'll see it on Boxing Day. A day when you will see the king arrive in his kingdom and he will be greeted by his people.

Let me read a part of it for you. Then Frodo came forward and took the crown from Faramah and bore it to Gandalf and Aragorn knelt.

And Gandalf set the white crown upon his head and said, Now come the days of the king and may they be blessed while the thrones of valour endure. But when Aragorn arose, all that beheld his gaze gazed in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them now for the first time.

[2 : 27] Tall as the sea kings of old, he stood above them all that were near. Ancient of days he seemed, and yet in the flower of manhood. And wisdom sat upon his brow and strength and healing were in his hands.

And a light was about him. And then Faramah cried, Behold the king! And in that moment all the trumpets were blown. And King El-Sar went forth and came to the barrier.

And Hurun of the keys thrust it back and amid the music of harp and violin and flute and the singing of clear voices, the king passed through the flower-laden streets and came to the citadel and entered in.

Then the banner of the tree and stars was unfurled upon the topmost tower. And the reign of King El-Sar began, of which many songs have told.

For me, as I read this book, for those who know the book, it's obviously Lord of the Rings, Return of the King, the third part. For those who don't want to read the book, the movie's coming out on Boxing Day.

[3 : 31] As I got to this point in the book, there were tears streaming out my eyes. After the great battles, after so much turmoil, after coming to the brink of extinction, here was the great king entering his kingdom.

It was a great moment. A great moment. A far more humble entrance was a king who entered a temple some 2,000 years ago.

A king that did not go unnoticed. A king who was noticed by Simeon. If you have your Bibles open in front of you at the reading tonight, you will see that it was Simeon, a man who is described here as a righteous and devout Jew.

A man looking forward to the coming of the king. The consolation of Israel. He knew that things had been going not so well for Israel ever since the days of King David.

In fact, all the way back to the Garden of Eden. But he knew that God's promises, he knew of them. He knew of a great king that would come.

[4 : 49] He longed for that Messiah. The promised King of David. The one to bring healing and restoration. The one to bring freedom from the enemies of God. Simeon waited for the king.

He knew the king was coming. For we see in the passage that God actually by the Holy Spirit had told him that before his life's end he would see the king. And so we have this picture of Simeon waiting in the temple.

Waiting for the king. During primary school, I waited for a queen. The queen was coming to the little town of Bathurst in New South Wales.

And all the kids were gathered on the street. There I was with all my other friends with our little flags in hand waiting to meet the queen.

It was great excitement. Down the end of the street after much waiting we heard the roar. The queen was coming. Such excitement.

[5 : 57] I was going to meet the queen. I had my flag ready and she ripped past and kept on going. I must say I'm a little disappointed at my meeting of the queen.

She didn't seem that impressive. She wasn't overly talkative. In fact, I'm not even quite sure what she was wearing. She went past so quickly. But what was more impressive for me then, I guess, was missing out on school, walking up and down the main street of Bathurst.

It was kind of fun. Simeon was impressed when he saw the king. He was excited.

He was full of sheer exhilaration. Let me read to you what happened. Simeon. Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. Simeon saw the great king.

[7 : 14] He could now die in peace. He was content. Everything else in his life paled into insignificance. Everything was just a pale comparison.

The rest of his details of his life, his resume, all are relevant for him. All his accomplishments like garbage. He had seen the king.

The one to bring great salvation. God's promised salvation. Prepared for all the world to see. A bright shining light for the Gentiles. Glory for Israel. He was the one to bring peace between God and man.

God was faithful yet again to his word. Yet just as the parents were starting to marvel, Joseph and Mary, starting to listen to the praise given to their child, just at that moment Simeon brings a more sober mood to the meeting.

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, You can imagine Mary and Joseph there.

[8 : 33] He was their boy. Jesus. He's going to bring great salvation. Listen to this guy talking about our son. You can just imagine them just feeling up with pride and marveling at the whole situation.

And then Simeon comes and brings a cold blanket on the whole thing. Yes, it is a salvation. But a salvation that would reveal the hearts of humans. A salvation that would lay them bare before all.

A ministry that would divide the nation in two. Simeon saw that many would oppose Jesus in his ministry. And that this opposition would cause great pain for Mary.

For Jesus did indeed fulfill these great statements that Simeon said about him. Jesus grew up to be a man. And in his life, death and resurrection, he was the great king.

He was a great light to the Gentile nations. I stand here today as a testimony to that fact. That the nations have been brought in to God's kingdom.

[9 : 45] Through his death, through the king's death, he paid the penalty for you and me. That we may be a part of this kingdom. Through his resurrection from the dead, he guaranteed my eternal life with him in his kingdom forever.

Oh, what a great salvation he has brought. When I think of the great salvations that I've seen in this lifetime. Of Stuart Diver, stuck under the ground for so long.

For those who have been saved and rescued. They're great salvations. But none compare to that of the king. Yet not all see their need of salvation.

Not all accept his claims. His nation was divided over him and his claims. And so too today. Many are divided over his claims.

Jesus did enter his kingdom, the first of many. He did have a great victory. And because of this we can share in that victory now by faith. Yet we do not enjoy it in full.

[10:55] We wait for the time when the king will return. A returning that will be full of glory and splendour.

I can say with great assurance to you today that each one of us will have to face this king. How will you be when you face this king?

Will you be ready like Simeon? Looking forward. Longing for his kingdom. Michelle, my wife and I were separated by a great distance.

Our families lived at either end of the state. And so holiday times were kind of painful. But there was that moment when I would be waiting at the bus stop for Michelle to travel the nine hours on the bus to come back to university.

And I'd be waiting there. Longing to see her again. Just to hold her. To talk to her instead of over the phone. To see her face to face.

[12:05] But the times I'd sit there and I'd think, the bus is late. What if she doesn't arrive? What if she didn't get on the bus?

What if she's not coming back? These are the things that plague your mind when you're young and in love and you're not sure what's happening. And the bus is only two minutes late. But you know, you start worrying about these things.

But then sure enough, she'd arrive. Jesus will return. We can be absolutely sure of this. I don't know when he'll return.

He may arrive before I see the movie Return of the King. He may even arrive before tomorrow's eight o'clock service. He may even arrive before my daughters wake me up at five o'clock tomorrow morning to open the presents.

I don't know when the king will return. But he will return. Will you be ready for him? I know that.

[13:17] All right. Okay. All right.