

My eyes have seen your Salvation

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Date: 22 December 2019

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[0 : 00] The very first Christmas, Jesus is only a few weeks old. Mary and Joseph take him to the temple in Jerusalem. Jewish mothers, they had to offer a sacrifice for their purification after having a firstborn son.

The offering was supposed to be a lamb, but if you were too poor, like Mary and Joseph, a couple of pigeons would do. And you can imagine the scene, Mary and Joseph at the temple, lots of hustle and bustle, doing their duty as good Jews, a great day for the family, when all of a sudden old man Simeon breaks the rules.

He takes the baby without mum's permission. He holds him up and says, now I can die happy. Have a look at sentence 29 of the passage that Warwick read.

Sentence 29. Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation. A few weeks ago in my wife's family, a firstborn son was also born.

And out of his 18 cousins, little Oscar, who's right over there, little Oscar is the first son of a son. In other words, he'll be the only child amongst 18 grandkids to carry on the family name.

[1 : 18] But when granddad took little Oscar in his arms, I don't think he did a Simeon. Now I can die happy. You see, meeting baby Jesus was a bucket list moment for Simeon.

Sentence 26 says, it had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Lord's Messiah. That means God's King.

We were discussing bucket lists during the break, weren't we? The list of things you have to do before you die. For lots of people, it's exciting things like skydiving or seeing a megastar in concert. For me, I really want to go camping around Australia. As my wife, hint, hint, camping around Australia. Well, one day, at that very first Christmas, Simeon ticked off his bucket list. because he had been waiting his whole life to see a megastar, God's Messiah, the baby King. A rule for meeting babies is don't crush them with too many expectations.

[2 : 25] So Oscar's parents over there, they're not allowed to say, we're giving him just one year before he walks and talks. But have a look at Simeon's expectation in sentence 30.

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. You're not allowed to say to a baby, one day you'll grow up to save the world.

Normally, with salvation, it's adults who save the baby. So I'm always saving my daughter from electrical sockets or my son from falling off the jetty when we go fishing.

But for Simeon, it's the other way around. Because verse 31 says, Jesus has been prepared by God in the sight of all nations to be our savior.

Our savior. And on one level, that's really positive, isn't it? The tone of this passage is celebration and blessing. But on another level, how badly must we have messed things up if God himself has to send a savior?

[3 : 37] And here's the thing. You see, all of us, all of us have rejected God's place in our lives. We've all tried to run his world without him. And the Bible calls that sin.

It says that sin has messed up our relationships with one another and the world. But supremely, sin messes up our relationship with God. It leaves us in darkness when it comes to him.

That is, facing his just and measured judgment. When Simeon meets baby Jesus, he doesn't just meet a cutie with his mom's eyes. He sees a light in the darkness.

Someone who will reveal God to us. That is the central claim of Christianity, in case you don't know. God comes into the world as a baby to restore relationship with him, to save us from sin and judgment.

We've seen a lot of saviors lately, haven't we, with the bushfires. Can you imagine how scary it would be to be trapped on your property, roads and phones cut off, fires surrounding your property, thick, dark smoke everywhere, really in fear of your life and then suddenly, through the smoke, you see those lights, those red and blue lights of the fire engine.

[4 : 56] Verse 32 says, Jesus is not a light in a bushfire, but a light who reveals God's salvation because he is God. And that should make him the best Christmas present ever.

Jesus should be the megastar. But he's not, is he? Jesus won't make it on anyone's bucket list, let alone their Christmas lists this year.

We said that meeting babies was not a time for brutal honesty, but look what Simeon says to Mary in verse 34. He basically says, one day, people are really going to hate your son.

Imagine meeting a baby and saying that to his mum. One day, people are really going to hate your son. Verse 34, 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.

In other words, our falling or rising with God depends on whether we speak against this baby. That is what reveals what our hearts are like.

[6 : 09] You see, in Australia, the test of our hearts is about good person, bad person, good bloke, bad bloke. It's about things like manners on the road. It's whether you give someone a thank you wave when you're driving.

Have you ever done that when you're driving on the road and someone's right next to you and they're trying to get into your lane and you say, well, I'll slow down to let them get in and they don't give you that thank you wave? It's pure evil, isn't it?

You see, that is the Aussie heart test. But God says the real sign of our hearts is how we treat his son. Verse 34, Jesus is a sign that will be spoken against or not.

Why? So that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. You see, I think we're happy with the idea of a saviour. It sounds very positive. Someone who'll sweep the mess of our lives under a carpet or perhaps cover over our lives the way snow covers a dirty street and makes it look pretty. But someone who reveals our hearts, who shows what we're like on the inside, no, thank you. And that is why Jesus isn't a megastar.

[7 : 22] Not during the year and certainly not at Christmas. For those people who reject Jesus in their lives, who speak against him as it were, that is a sign to God of what your hearts are like.

But for those who know they're in a mess with him, who feel the weight of their own sin, however uncomfortable that is, Jesus has come to be a saviour so they can rise to new life even though they die.

And all of that, that is what the prophet saw that first Christmas. But our author also gives us a glimpse of that first Easter too.

You see, the whole time Simeon has been breaking baby rules, Mary has been holding two dead pigeons in her hand, lifeless and bloodied.

Because one day, they'll be holding her son, lifeless and bloodied. Pigeons were offered up for Mary's purification when she had a firstborn son.

[8 : 26] One day, her firstborn son will be offered up for everyone's purification. You see, in Australia, Christmas and Easter, they're very different, aren't they?

One is about presents, the other is about chocolate. But for Christians, they're tightly linked. Because as we look at this first Christmas, we also get a glimpse of that first Easter. when Jesus will be offered up on a cross like an animal sacrifice to atone for the sin and the judgment that we all deserve so we can rise to new life.

We talked about baby rules, rules for meeting babies. Here's God's rule for this baby. Accept his gift of salvation. If you want peace with God, put your trust in this little baby and his death for you.

This can be as simple as a very easy prayer. Why not ask the person who brought you how? We talked about bucket lists as well, the things to do before you die.

[9 : 31] God says, forget the camping trip. Forget the camping trip and be like Simeon. See Jesus the way Simeon does before you die.

If you see Jesus as a saviour, then like Simeon, you too can die happy. He says in sentence 29, Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation.

Naomi is going to come up now and tell us a few things more about how to find out more, but before she does, I'm going to pray. Father God, we thank you that Christmas is good news of great joy and that is for all people.

And thank you that at that first Christmas you sent your only son, our saviour, the Lord Jesus.

Thank you that you prepared him as you had promised to save the world.

Please would we see him as that this year. In Jesus' name. Amen.