

Looking for Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] as we get started on our last Sunday school of 2024. You know, and another year is going to be completed shortly, and you get the anticipation of that new one that's coming around the corner.

I mean, it's one of those elements we have to have the break from that, but, you know, some people, when they look at the new year, they're either excited or they're not looking forward to it. But, you know, as a believer, I want to encourage you with this good news. Is the beginning of a new year means we're one year closer to the Lord's return. And we'll be out of here and not have to deal with this mess called this world.

And so that's the good news of this, that we're going to celebrate. You know, but as we celebrated Christmas and last week reflected upon his first coming, it's best that we don't forget that each passing year, we ought to reflect on the fact this could be the year.

You know, oftentimes one of the Jewish traditions is next year in Jerusalem. As a believer, it ought to be next year in glory. You know, I was thinking about that this week.

[1 : 0 8] I'm like, that's a good thought, you know, next year in glory. You know, that's something we ought to look forward to. That we can look forward to what God has done. And every generation of believers has thought they would be the one that would see Jesus come again.

And that's the way Jesus made it. And he wanted us to be ready. You know, we just talked about that. But to be ready for it. And so this morning we're going to continue looking over in Luke chapter 2 this morning.

We're going to talk about a couple of other individuals here in Luke chapter 2. Because we find two people here that were looking for Jesus. They were looking for the Lord.

They had lived their lives looking for the Lord to come. You know, they were present at Jesus' first coming. And they were confident that they would live to see the Messiah.

They had been watching and faithfully serving God with the expectation that the Lord's Christ would soon be on the scene. Their hopes were realized one day as they were serving in the temple.

[2 : 1 2] Everything they had looked forward to. Everything that God had promised to that point. They had the opportunity to witness. And we're going to talk about two individuals here this morning.

That they had a hope of this. And their hopes were realized when one day in the temple, a young couple came with a new baby boy. And this is what we're going to pick up here in Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2 is Jesus coming into the temple. And we need to keep in mind this morning that we ought to be optimistic about His coming again, just as these two were optimistic and looking for the Savior to come.

And so we see here, just as those here in the first century, we can anticipate it also. Let's look here in Luke chapter 2. Look down at verse 22 this morning. Luke chapter 2 and verse 22 says this, And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

As is written in the law, The Lord every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord, to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

[3 : 3 2] And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Ghost was upon him.

And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple.

And when the parents brought the child Jesus to do for him after the custom of the law, they took him up. Then he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, thou lettest thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.

For my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.

And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fallen rising against many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against.

[4 : 38] Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of thy heart may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanel, of the daughter of the tribe of Asher.

She was of great age and had lived with a husband 70 years from her virginity. And she was a widow of about four score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day.

And she came in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own city, Nazareth.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we just take a few moments here to look at these two that were ready, were watching for you, Lord. We pray to be an encouragement to us also to know, even as we've looked at this morning, what it looks and what it means, and the joy that it comes to know that you're coming and what it will mean when that day comes.

Lord, we pray just have your hand upon each one today. We might be encouraged and strengthened from your word, and we give you all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen. You know, here we have the first one that we have is Simeon.

[5 : 58] You know, the Bible says that he was waiting for the comfort, the consolation of those things. Mary and Joseph had come into the temple.

You know, we know that Mary and Joseph were faithful Jewish parents. You know, they were faithful to do all that the law commanded them to do. They were doing all the things that they had been instructed.

The Bible says there just a little earlier that they circumcised Jesus on the eighth day. On the eighth day, they had Jesus circumcised, which was according to the law that he had given to Moses, according to the covenant that God had made with Abraham, to those descendants of Abraham.

And he had made that connection there. They circumcised him the eighth day, according to the law. Leviticus chapter 12 in verse 3 is where you find that commandment that they were to be circumcised.

The males were on the eighth day. And there's some reasons behind that when you study the scripture. You know, sometimes we ask, well, why did they circumcise the child on the eighth day? We'll test your Bible.

[7 : 06] Your detailed Bible trivia this morning. I'll give you a little clue. Everything you find in scripture concerning days, God lines out the wise. Seven days, Mary giving birth would have been considered unclean.

On the eighth day, she was allowed to enter the sanctuary, allowed to do those things. So they circumcised the child on the eighth day, when the mom was able to participate.

Immediately following, a young mom would be declared unclean on her waiting period again of 32 days. Forty days in all, a mom would wait before they would bring the child to the temple.

So we know this was 40 days after Jesus was born. Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple to fulfill the next part of their responsibility.

They're coming into the temple. There are 32 days. They made that seven-mile walk from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to present Jesus to the Lord.

[8 : 16] You know, take a look back in the Old Testament for a moment. There are Numbers chapter 3 for a moment. Numbers chapter 3 because, you know, how many times have you read this and really stopped to consider all the things that are being fulfilled here?

The things that not only identify, but also allow Jesus to perfectly keep the law. If he was our Savior, if he was sinless, part of that responsibility fell on his parents to do and to keep the law, all the things he was supposed to do.

He couldn't get there as a young child by himself, but notice here in verse 13, it says this, and because all the firstborn are mine, for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I hollowed unto me all the firstborn of Israel, both man and beast, mine shall they be, I am the Lord. Now this is just one place as this is repeated to the children of Israel, that they are to bring the firstborn son and dedicate them unto the Lord because they belong to the Lord.

Now in this, you'll find that this goes back because who can think of a mom who brought her first son to be dedicated unto the Lord? Hannah brought Samuel.

[9 : 34] Except in that case, she literally dedicated and gave him to the Lord. But part of this, when you read through scripture, we don't have time this morning, the parents could redeem the child with an offering.

We know Hannah, there's no mention of her redeeming Samuel. She gave and dedicated Samuel unto God. And we know that Samuel served God his whole life, that she would bring him clothes, she would bring him all those things.

But here Jesus, we find that Mary and Joseph redeem the child. It's a picture that we see. They came to offer the sacrifice that was required by the Mosaic law to purify Mary and to allow her to return to worship in the temple.

And the synagogue is also when Jesus would be officially dedicated to God. And really, you might say, for his real father, you know, because Joseph was just his stepdad, if you want to use modern terms.

You know, he's the one that took Jesus in and helped provide and to raise. As Mary's husband, he was not the father of Jesus. We know that was the Holy Spirit.

[10 : 45] You know, the text here we find, because notice as we look back here, in what we were reading here, notice what it tells us, verse 22. And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

Because notice, verse 23 tells us that from the Old Testament. As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy unto the Lord, and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves and two young pigeons. Now, here's another good little insight that you'll find. This kid tells us the financial status of Mary and Joseph. You know, it's little things in Scripture that really help you understand what was going on and where they were at.

What clue gives you here of what their financial status was? Sacrifice. Yeah, the sacrifice, because when we look in the Old Testament, they were to bring two different things.

They were either to bring a lamb of the first year and a turtle dove or a pigeon as an offering, one for a burnt offering, one for a sin offering. If they could not afford the lamb, it was permitted for them to bring two pigeons or two turtle doves.

[12 : 02] One to be the burnt offering, one to be the sin offering. What was that? That was the poor person's offering, you might say, because the bird was cheaper than buying the lamb. So we know from what they bought that they didn't have much means.

They were not wealthy. They were not well off. Which, just to ruin your Christmas tale, that means Mary did not ride a donkey to Jerusalem or down to Bethlehem because donkeys were for rich people.

You know, that's a rich person's animal to have. So we know certain things that kind of ruin the Christmas story that we have in our mind as kids, you know, and adults, as you always see Mary riding the donkey, you know.

I know, kids aren't up here, so I won't spoil it for them, you know. But you know, those are those little details in Scripture. But notice here, they couldn't afford a lamb. It was a poor family sacrifice. It says they were introduced doing these things because they were to bring it to the priest and to offer the sacrifice before the Lord. And while they're there, they come in and something takes place.

[13 : 09] We find an old Jewish worshiper by the name of Simeon, one who had received a revelation from the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had personally witnessed the coming Messiah.

Look here in verse 25 back in Luke chapter 2. It says, Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. The same man was just and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him, and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Now, as we consider in the Old Testament, the Old Testament times were different from today. We need to keep what's being said there important, but it says in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come and go from people.

The Holy Spirit could come upon a person and depart. Now, what's different about today? Today, as a New Testament saint, because Christ has paid the price for our sin, the Comforter has come, and the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer.

That's how Jesus says, I will never leave you nor forsake you. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come and go from people. In the New Testament, we have a promise that he will never depart.

[14 : 25] He is the earnest of our salvation. We have a special promise. You know, like I said, I'm glad all the promises of Scripture don't belong to me. I'm glad that we have specific ones that do apply to us.

Like, once you're saved, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. He is our security of the promise to be fulfilled that we will one day be completely and fully redeemed.

Brought out from very presence of sin. You know? And we see here of what took place because when Mary and Joseph show up, they're offering these things. Now, I don't know about you, but I just kind of picture in my mind knowing moms, that this is one of those weird moments.

Because here's Mary, because have you ever been around young moms? How do young moms treat a seven-day-old baby? Or excuse me, at this point, you'd be 40 days old.

That's still pretty old. How are most young moms at that stage? Yeah, they're like, you know, they're in, don't you dare.

[15 : 31] But I want you to see the picture here. Simeon walks over and doesn't tell us all. It says he took the baby. I imagine that he wasn't a brave enough guy just to take him. I suspect he asked.

But he looks at Jesus and makes a proclamation. Here, Mary and Joseph had already seen all these things 40 days earlier with the angel, with the shepherds. Prior to that, about 11 months earlier, the angel had come to them and declared all these things.

I mean, they had quite a year. They had a lot of things happen in that year. So here comes up Simeon and notice what he says about this child. He says, Lord, thou knowest, thou lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.

You know, here's an old guy that says, Lord, I can go to heaven now because what you've promised me has been fulfilled. I got to see the Savior. How did he know who Jesus is?

What in the text, how do we know he knew who Jesus is? How did he know? He says, the Holy Spirit revealed it to him. The Holy Spirit allowed him to know and he does this.

[16 : 42] He comes and he takes the child and he says, for my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.

You know, and Joseph and Mary, and Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which are spoken of him. You know, marveled.

They were amazed. And I'm thinking in my mind, I don't know about you, but what more could amaze you at that point of all the things that have happened in their life? You had the angel come talk to them. You had the shepherds come make a declaration.

And now they get, and Simeon comes up to them and says, hey, I know who the child is. They were caught off guard once again. They marveled at what was being said. And then he addresses Mary. Verse 34, it says, And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for a fall and rising again of many in Israel. For as a sign which shall be spoken against you, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

[17 : 47] You know, he brought some good news, but he also looked at Mary and said, hey, as a mom, there's going to be some struggle coming. This is a prophecy that's applied when Mary was sitting at the foot of the cross.

Not just as a person witnessing it, but as a mom. Piercing her own soul the reality of what was going to come to pass. Preparing her for what was going to come that God was going to allow and what God had prophesied was going to come to pass.

Because all this was coming about because Jesus was going to save his people. He was going to provide redemption for everyone. You know, notice verse 30.

He says, my eyes have seen what? Thy salvation. He says, here's the one that's going to bring salvation not only to the Jews, but to you and I, to the Gentiles.

All these things were revealed and this prophecy reveals so much and Mary's going to experience that unique sorrow because what Jesus is going to face and what she has to go through we have Simeon the prophet that comes and does this but then we have another individual by the name of Anna.

[19 : 01] Now Anna's another unique individual when it comes to this account because it's another individual unattached. You know, there's no real connection in the story.

There's nothing there and Anna is waiting for that forgiveness that God brings. Notice here because she's the one that she's excited to hear what Simeon had to say about the salvation of the Lord. Look at verse 36. It says, and there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phaniel of the tribe of Asher. She was of great age and had lived with a husband of her husband seven years from her virginity and was a widow of about four score and four years which she parted not from the temple but served God with fasting and prayer night and day.

And so we see here that Anna was a godly widow who had anticipated God's deliverance would come. You know, think about, read through that for a moment and what things do we know about Anna?

What are some things we can learn from her from the passage? She was old. How old was she? You know, she was getting up in years, definitely, you know, at least 84 years.

[20 : 13] Yeah. She lived upon the temple grounds. What else do we learn from her or about her? Yeah, she served God.

It was her focus. And we learn lots of things. One is that she had nobody else to take care of her probably because what would have been a custom of the day is the widows that were widows indeed that they talk about later in the New Testament because there is a difference between a widow and a widow indeed.

That term there signifies something very important because what it signifies is means because some widows of that day would have had means from the family and others that would have been able to take care of them which family is always the first option.

But then you're going to have some that have no means. You know, who are some widows that didn't have any means that you can think of in Scripture? Who's that? Yeah, the widow that was with Elijah there and the kings.

Remember, she was poor and was what? She was gathering up all the, to eat their last meal. The widow with two mites.

[21 : 25] What's that? Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth. I mean, when you read that account that's some of that dynamic and where'd they, where'd Naomi and Ruth go back to?

They went to family and the family was beginning to make provision. So we see this pattern in Scripture and that's one of those things that we can learn from that.

We can know that she was another term here that talks about her being a prophetess which indicates that she was one that was excited about what God is doing. She was a declarer of what God's doing, of what she knew and we understand she was a widow of, she'd only been married seven years before her husband died.

You know, that's a pretty short time. So she had been a widow quite a while. I mean, we look at this and probably 60 plus years she'd been a widow.

So this is not, where she was wasn't new, you know, she was of great age but she was also in the temple night and day and serving God, you know, and the priests and what they would have done is the temple would have had an area where the widows could come and stay and to help out and the temple would have helped take care of what came in the temple would have helped take care of some of the widows.

[22 : 47] It was like a widow housing that they would have had around the temple grounds that would have been associated. That's what history reveals to us about how they would have dealt with that, you know, if you want biblical social programs, that was God's social program is that God's people made sure people were taken care of.

And that's a whole other discussion for another day to get into of culture and modern day dynamics of things. But, so we'll not get down that side trail this morning.

But she comes and she starts praising God upon seeing the baby because she's witnessing what Simeon is saying. You know, hey, here I've seen the salvation of the Lord. You know, she's excited about what she's hearing, that what she's been looking for and what is, that salvation has come. You know, both Simeon and Anna understood what they were looking for. Notice in verse 38, and she came in that instant and gave thanks likewise unto the Lord and spake of him of all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

In other words, this tells us what she did afterwards too. Because what she did after she learned that Jesus was born, that God's salvation had come. All those she came across, she started sharing it with.

[24 : 07] She was excited that God's salvation began sharing it with others. She had declared it to everybody that this baby is the one who will give and provide salvation.

You know, to be redeemed is the idea that God has bought us out of sin. You know, given us forgiveness and freed us to serve him willingly.

You know, Anna knew that ever since God had redeemed Israel from Egypt, the Passover had been celebrated in anticipation of God's ultimate salvation.

And she's happy to declare what God has promised and what God has revealed to them. And we see here that when Jesus arrived, God revealed to them that this was the Messiah they were looking to see all their lives.

You know, these two are interesting pair of individuals within the temple because they were looking and anticipating for what God was going to do. God revealed to them this was the Messiah they'd been looking for.

[25 : 09] Both of them had waited a lifetime to see the Savior. Both of these were old. You know, they didn't just start watching the day before. They'd been faithful for years looking and waiting and serving.

And we see here that they had both declared Jesus was the one they'd anticipated and they announced it to all that were around them. You know, because if we consider why is what's going on here important?

That's another good question to ask when you look at Scripture. Why is this recorded for us? What's it revealed to us? No, the preacher is making you think on Sunday morning. God giving reassurance.

You know, understand the promise. different responsibilities and different things that God God's orchestrating all this for people who up to this point we don't have any indication even knew one another.

But God put them in the right place at the right time. You know, and that's the way God works, that God puts people there and they died in peace knowing they had seen God's Christ.

[26 : 40] You know, think about that ideal of they were waiting for the Lord's salvation, they were waiting for the Lord to come. And think about Simeon's statement, he says, I can now depart in what?

Peace because I've seen God's salvation. You know, what a wonderful promise that is, that when it comes time to depart, when you know the Lord, you can depart in peace.

Knowing that you have the peace that passes all understanding, that God is fulfilling and will fulfill his promises. You know, after all these years, since Jesus was there the first time, we're now looking just like Simeon and Anna did.

You know, we talked this morning about watching. Simeon and Anna are great examples of faithful watchers. They were on watch looking for his first coming.

They're a great example, for us to be watching for his next. They're an example of that.

[27 : 43] After all those things, we ought to be looking for Jesus. You think about how many generations have just considered, well, this, I'm going to see Christ in my generation. You know?

I've met a lot of old preachers when I first started getting into this. Oh, I'm not going to die. The Lord's going to return first. You know? I think that's a hope of every believer because, you know, it ought to be a hope because it is something exciting because you know what you get to skip?

Death. You get caught up to be with him. You get to skip something that nobody looks forward to. But you know what? At the moment of death, it's still no different because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. It's just getting there a different way.

But everybody's expecting the Lord's return at any moment. You know? We can learn from Anna and Simeon that today we ought to be doing the same.

Being excited, looking forward to what God's going to do because we don't know if Jesus is going to come before the year's end. I mean, we might not even have to worry about 2025. You know?

[28 : 48] I ain't even getting an amen for that one. You know? But we don't know. It may be before we celebrate a new year. It may be next year. The reality is it may be 100 years from now.

We don't know. But we can learn from Simeon and Anna the very reality of what we talked about earlier this morning. Because they weren't sure either, but they were excited because they were looking.

They were waiting. You know, because after this many years, you know, many people get kind of off track. I mean, I think that's the other reason we see today. There's not many, there's fewer and fewer people looking for the Lord's return.

You see a shift of society, even amongst people who claim to trust Christ and claim to trust the Word of God, that they lose sight of the fact that the blessed hope is his coming.

And they begin to look and you see all sorts of weather doctrines starting to fade in. Well, he hasn't returned yet, so they begin to scoff at it. You know, 2 Peter 3 talks about that.

[29 : 57] Peter says in the later days there's going to be scoffers. And what are they going to be scoffing at? Where is the promise of his coming? You know, I think we're seeing some of that today, that people are scoffing once again.

You know, the Lord's not going to return, we don't have to worry about it. People lose sight of that importance. You know, I want to encourage you, don't let the scoffers and the pessimists cause you to question the word of God regarding Christ's return.

Because what God said is going to be so. Just as Simeon and Anna, why were they looking for the Lord's salvation? Because God said he was coming. We ought to be looking for our redemption because Jesus said it's coming.

We ought to be excited about those things and not let scoffers detract from it. You know, the good news is it could be this afternoon. You know, we don't know.

We can be looking and excited about those things. And so, what's something we can take away from this lesson? Well, at the beginning of a new year, we need to be optimistic that Jesus could come at any time.

[31 : 11] Because when you live in light of the Savior, it changes your choices. It alters the decisions and the priorities that you make. It gets us focused on the right things because, you know, we all face, we can, as we face the excitement and potential of a new year, we begin to prioritize things that are important.

But the most highest priority we ought to have is the consideration that this might be the year that Jesus returns. To keep our focus on the right things. Because this time of year, a lot of people, you say, what are you talking about priorities?

You know, people reprioritize things. resolutions. You know, today we call them resolutions. You know, I'm not going to be so fat in 25.

You know, I'm going to eat better, I'm going to exercise better, I'm going to take more responsibility and accountability, you know, and you have all sorts of things people resolve to do and it's ironic because most people don't keep them for the first two weeks.

By January 14th, most resolutions are broken. But as a believer, we ought to make sure that our focus upon the Savior returning isn't broken. That we're living in light of those things.

[32 : 25] We ought to be prepared for what God is doing. You know, to be personally prepared for the return of the Lord and why we're waiting for His return. We need to be doing.

You know, think about what did we learn from Anna and what did we learn from Simeon about what we ought to be doing while we're waiting. I'll give you a clue. Look over in verse 37.

Serving. You know, to do those things. You know, we already talked about this this morning, but this is a great example of the application of the morning's message.

We see people actually living and doing exactly what Jesus told us to do. Giving us those things that we ought to do. And they were in the temple praying and fasting.

They waited for the redemption of Israel and the coming Messiah. She was actively involved in what God was doing and serving other people. You know, Anna, I believe, gives us an example of someone who was watching and waiting for the coming Messiah.

[33 : 27] The same we ought to be today. We have examples of what God instructs us to do. That it's not outside the realm because if other people could do it, you know what that tells you?

That we could have that same focus. We have that same accountability. You know, and that Anna was quick to tell everybody about her experience with the Redeemer.

You know, that's another example of those things, you know, of how we behave while we look for Jesus to return. We ought to be looking for that imminent return of Jesus, but while we wait, we ought to be busy about the Lord's work and telling others to be prepared.

To let others know how to be prepared and that they need to be prepared, you know. But that comes first when you understand it yourself. You can't be excited about something that you don't have any connection with, you know.

It's kind of like watching Husker football fans yesterday. They're all excited because they've been waiting ten years for this. They had a connection.

[34 : 42] You know, you're excited because there's a connection. When you're not connected, it loses emphasis in your life. And so as we look at these things, I want to just encourage you as we get ready to enter into a new year to be involved and to use the example of even Anna and Simeon to allow the Spirit to guide you, direct you, but to be busy working to do what God wants us to do.

Because just like Anna in the New Testament, let's serve God and pray how we can best work for the Lord while we wait and watch for His return.

Some things to consider as we get ready to enter a new year. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we come before you today, Lord, I just thank you for your word.