

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 December 2018

Preacher: Rev. Jeremy Graham

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. Mariah Carey set a new world record this week. Mariah Carey's hit song, All I Want for Christmas is You, it had the most single-day plays on Spotify in world history.

10.8 million times that song was played on Christmas Eve. And I have a feeling that some of you helped set that record, didn't you?

Even if you don't want to admit it. All I Want for Christmas is You is a Christmas song that entirely misses the point. And what we discover in this Bible passage this morning is that that should not surprise us.

Because it's easy to go right through the whole Christmas season and entirely miss the point. That's because, as I was saying to the boys and girls, it's easy to look right at Jesus and not really see Him.

And Simeon was a man who got the point. Simeon was a man who was given eyes to see this child Jesus. And he saw, when he looked at Jesus, an entirely new and unique thing that God was doing.

[1 : 20] So what does he do? Well, he sings. We don't actually know if he sang. But Christian tradition has turned his words into a song.

And Luke certainly records those words in a lyrical and poetic way. Simeon saw something amazing and so he responded by praising God. So if you open your Bibles with me to Luke 2, the passage we just heard read, I want to simply ask two questions this morning.

Why did Simeon see, first of all? And what did Simeon see? Why did Simeon see and what did Simeon see? So first, why Simeon sees?

It was probably a busy day at the temple. Hundreds of people milling about. Dozens of baby boys in their mother's arms. Eagerly waiting for their turn to receive ritual circumcision at eight days old. Maybe not that eagerly. With all that busyness, one man entered the temple with eyes only for one thing.

[2 : 28] Look at verse 25. 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.

Notice first the repetition of these sight words. So we see that it's been revealed or shown to him.

We read he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

And then further down in the verses we didn't read, in verse 30, he says, My eyes have seen your salvation. And notice second, the repetition of the word, the Holy Spirit, the reference to the Holy Spirit.

Verse 25, the Holy Spirit was upon him. Verse 26, it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 27, he came in the Spirit into the temple. So why did Simeon see when so many others in the temple that day did not?

[3 : 34] Luke tells us it's because the Holy Spirit reveals it to him. The Spirit of God opens his eyes. Simeon wasn't any smarter. He wasn't any more religious.

He wasn't even following a star that day. Now it might seem to you kind of unfair. Why should God let Simeon see while all the other people in the temple that day, they miss out?

They don't see anything special about this baby child. But the key understanding here is that the word revealed literally means a divine response.

It refers to providing an answer to someone who is seeking guidance. What I'm saying is that it's not a passive receiving.

It's not a case of eenie, meenie, minie, moe, I'll choose you today. But it's an active relationship with the one who reveals. So in the book of Acts, Luke uses the same word, reveals, to describe God's response to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, who is a man seeking after God.

[4 : 52] The Lord reveals himself to him. And Luke tells us that Simeon was a righteous and devout man. And that doesn't mean he thought he was better than every other person around him.

No. It means that Simeon was looking for God to act, longing for God's promises to be fulfilled, asking, praying for God's salvation to arrive.

He recognized that there was nothing he could do in himself to save himself. And so he waited patiently for the Lord to act and to reveal the Messiah to him within his lifetime, as he had promised. And that particular day, he obeyed the prompting of the Holy Spirit to go to the temple with open eyes. And friends, you and I know how easy it is to miss the person and the message of Jesus Christ, because there are so many voices.

So many catchy Mariah Carey songs. So much to do and places to visit, meals to cook, things to buy. And furthermore, our natural sight.

[6 : 04] You see, I take off my glasses and I can barely even read the page in front of me. Our natural sight is blind. It does not easily see Jesus as Lord and Savior.

We see him and we stumble over his humble origins, his modest ministry, his humiliating death, the astounding claims of his resurrection, and the dubious track record of his church.

Just like Simeon, we require the gift of spiritual sight, a gift of God's Holy Spirit, in order to recognize Jesus and turn to him and see him and hear him.

It's as simple, though, as asking and receiving. And for some of us here this morning, it may mean receiving a gift for the very first time.

It may mean putting on those glasses for the very first time. And for others, it could be that you need to ask for a fresh gift of grace in order to see Jesus again.

[7 : 13] And friends, God is here. He is here. Simply ask and receive. So that is why Simeon sees.

But what is it that Simeon sees? And let's begin with verse 30. Have a look at verse 30 with me. For my eyes have seen your salvation.

That's the beginning of Simeon's song. So Simeon holds an eight-day-old baby in his arms. Maybe he holds him up like this. I don't know. Looks him right in the eye. And he sees God's salvation.

He sees the Lord's Christ, the Savior and the King. And what is this salvation that Simeon sings of? What does it consist of? What glimpse do we get of salvation here from Simeon's song?

I just want to focus on one aspect of salvation that Simeon reveals. You can see it in verse 29.

Verse 29. Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

[8 : 17] Peace. Salvation means peace, Simeon tells us. And peace here means more than just peace and quiet. It means more than world peace, a sort of an end of all fighting and warfare.

As a Jewish man, Simeon, he would have used the Hebrew word shalom, which is a word, it has many facets, sort of like a diamond.

It's a beautiful word. And first of all, it means peace with oneself, peace with myself. Meaning that those who trust in the Lord and in his salvation, they experience an inner peace, a freedom and a contentment, which comes from belonging to the Savior.

And secondly, it means peace with one another, peace with our neighbors. So Simeon sees a shalom that Jesus will bring that will reconcile a broken humanity, offering a new life and a new lifestyle for people who see Jesus as Lord.

And most of all, this peace, it means a peace with God, a peace of vertical peace. Because sin, it tears apart this peace.

[9 : 34] It breaks it. It creates restlessness. It creates violence and enmity between us and God. And salvation means a reconciliation of shalom with God.

It's a restoration of that intimate friendship that we're meant to have. And involved in this, Simeon is alluding to this removal of our deepest fear, the fear of death.

Now you are letting your servant depart in peace. Peace with God, friends, means eternal life. It means a certain hope that our eternal future is secure with God.

All this, Simeon glimpses, holding this beautiful, just this beautiful little humble child. And best of all, verse 32 declares that this peace, it's not going to be just reserved for a few.

It's not just going to be for Jews. It's not going to just be for priests. It's not just going to be for people living in the Western world today. God's salvation is to be a light for revelation to the Gentile

and for glory to your people Israel.

[10:45] So it's going to shine on all people, all of us here, east and west, and offers the free gift of peace and new life through Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace.

Now this is not all that Simeon sees this day as he holds the child. Having praised God for his salvation, he then turns to Mary and he tells her a second thing that he sees.

Look at verse 34 with me. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, look, 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 from many hearts may be revealed. Simeon, he sees opposition. The word opposed here, it literally means to speak against. He sees that God's salvation will cause a crisis for every person who encounters Jesus. And the question that immediately comes to my mind is why would anyone want to oppose this message of peace that we just heard about?

[12:08] It sounds like good news, right? Except that the nature of light is that wherever it shines into the darkness, it exposes and it uncovers what's hidden.

And not everyone who experiences this light will welcome it. J.C. Ryle once said, People who agree in nothing else have agreed in hating Jesus.

Look closer at the second half of verse 34 with me. Remember it said, Behold, or look, this child is appointed for the falling and the rising of many in Israel.

Falling here, it has the connotation of a collapsing building, of a downfall towards ruin. And this word used for rising, rising, in the Greek it's actually a resurrection word.

It's a word that's used to refer to a raising up towards blessedness and this peace that we've been talking about. It's the new life that we're offered in Christ's death and resurrection. John Stott writes, Jesus is the rock that some will stumble and trip on and others, they will stand on it and they will build their lives on it.

[13:26] But no one who looks at the child can remain neutral. Because the cross of Christ, which is the only means of our salvation, it is not an easy thing to glimpse.

For the sentimental, it seems grotesque. For the intellectual, it seems foolish. And for the religious, it just seems unnecessary. But my response, Simeon is telling us here, my response to Jesus, it will reveal my heart.

And my response will lead either to my downfall or to my raising up. And as we conclude, it's very simple, brothers and sisters. Don't miss the point.

Don't celebrate the season, the days off work, the time with grandchildren, and fail to see this child, this Jesus, as God's salvation for you and me.

No one will ever argue that Simeon sings as beautifully as Mariah Carey. But that's not the point. The gospel is not pop music.

[14:40] It speaks the truth to our proud hearts. Ask to see this Jesus. He knows what's in your heart and He still loves you.

He wants to give you peace. He wants to give you new life and to raise you up. Amen.