

# Luke 2:21-38 - Consolation in Disruption

*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: 18 September 2016

Preacher: Ron

[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

If you have Bibles with you, open them to Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2.

And the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 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. 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.

[ 2 : 02 ] 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 mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and the rising of many in Israel. And for a sign that is opposed. And a sword will pierce through your own soul also. So that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phineas, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was 84.

She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

[ 3 : 25 ] Would you pray with me as we approach the study of God's word? Father, we come to what to some may seem a simple task, and that is we're going to read some words, and we're going to talk about them, and we want to understand them.

But that's not the hard part. The hard part's in our hearts, and also that's why we need this study. So would you pour out your spirits and speak to us now from your word.

Father, you've chosen a fool to proclaim your glory. And we know that, Father, we need your spirit. So would you come, meet us, give me words to say, and give us ears to hear what you would have to say. And we ask, in the great name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. I'm excited to be here, bringing God's word to you. Will told me we had an hour, so don't laugh.

[ 4 : 44 ] You know, this is not one of the most popular of the Christmas stories, as we will see when we get into it. But it's still one of my favorite.

You know, up until now, you come through Luke 1 and Luke 2, and you've got all these, you've got all these warm and warm fuzzies after seeing, you know, these two boys born from very dramatic circumstances.

You know, the shepherds, and the story of the shepherds, and the angels, and all of that. And, you know, what a story for the ages.

But that kind of ends in verse 21. And this account of Simeon often, most often, is not included in the rest, but it is highly significant.

Otherwise, Luke would not have put it here in this critical place. This story contains, if you look through the birth narrative of Jesus, there are basically four songs that Luke gives us.

[ 6 : 00 ] You have the song of Zechariah, the song of Mary, you have the song of the angels, and now you have this song of Simeon. And this, in the Latin, this song is called the nuke dimittis, which basically means now you are dismissing.

And so, we have Simeon here, someone that we know hardly anything about. But what we do know from this particular account is that Simeon was a godly man.

More than likely, he was a part of the leadership of Israel. And he has been made, to him, has been given a very, very special promise.

somehow, in some way, the Holy Spirit has communicated to him that he would not see death until his eyes had seen the Messiah.

God's God's And so, now, in this period of Simeon's life, more than likely, those hopes, you know, those days of possibility of this being fulfilled are fleeting.

[ 7 : 20 ] And so, as an old man, he comes into the temple, and, I mean, think about what transpires here. He comes to the temple just like any other day, every day, as he's coming in to do his worship.

But this day, as he's in the temple, he hears a baby cry. Not just any baby, but a baby that sets his heart aflame.

And you can see him kind of pushing his way through the crowds, and he's trying, he comes up to, and he's trying to find the source. And he comes up to this young couple with an infant son in their arms.

And he takes up this child and sings. He sings because his eyes have at last gazed on the promised consolation that has come to Israel.

I mean, what a moment. You know, the significance of this moment, in many ways, what Luke is doing here, he's doing several things.

[ 8 : 48 ] This is, in many ways, this is pointing to the bridge from the old system to the new, where the old, the faithful of Israel, where Simeon, in a way, represents Israel itself.

Simeon, in many ways, was what Israel should have been. But now, Simeon says, now let your servant depart in peace. And the new has come, and the child of Jesus.

And so the significance of what Simeon is saying here is all bound up, I think, in those words where Luke describes him as awaiting the consolation of Israel.

And that consolation, those words, come from Isaiah chapter 40. In the very first verses of Isaiah 40, where it says, comfort, oh, comfort my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

[ 10 : 00 ] And some, like Simeon, had been faithfully, faithfully waiting for this fulfillment. And the word consolation, that word comfort, they're really the same words.

In fact, it's the same word that will be used of the Holy Spirit who comes to us as the comforter. He comes as that consolation. And so what Simeon says in response to this, he says two things, in this song he says two things.

And he says two things about what this child is going to bring to Israel. And the first, he said really it's not to Israel itself, he's coming as a light of revelation to the Gentiles.

Now, this, when he says this, when he's talking about the light of revelation, he's not talking about just real light, physical light, but what he's talking about is the light of knowledge, not the light of ignorance.

And when he's, excuse me, I'm off, I'm not used to preaching from paper. I'm used to something not quite so high tech. But the light of revelation, the world has been living in darkness and the ignorance of who God is and all that he is, and they've been groping about in darkness, trying to figure it all out.

[ 11 : 46 ] And I don't know if you've ever been in a place of real darkness. Have you ever been in a room or a place where it was so dark you couldn't see your hand right in front of your face? And have you ever been there for a long time?

It's oppressive. But this is the way our world is. When we lived in Hungary, Gail and I went down into the city one day to one of the main city squares, like we love to do, but on that particular day, there was a whole big group of Hare Krishnas having a festival of some kind and a lot of booths and a lot of places they were selling things and demonstrating things and you'd see all these idols and all these trinkets and all this stuff and as you walk through this, the darkness of all this superstition

was grievous and just oppressive.

but I mean, I've seen it not just there, I had a good friend and this friend normally was very rational, very logical, always tried to make good solid decisions because, I mean, that's what you do, you just think well and you make good decisions, but yet every time he said something like he hoped would happen, he could not help himself but to knock on wood.

And if he didn't have wood, he would knock himself in the head, which as I thought about it was appropriate. But somehow we thought that this inanimate material had some kind of control over his destiny.

And that's darkness. And it reminds me of Isaiah again in chapter 44. This is, in some ways, as Isaiah writes these verses that you'll see here, it's really kind of comical.

[ 13 : 52 ] Because he describes a guy who goes and cuts a piece of wood, and half of the piece of wood, he burns in the fire and cooks his dinner, the other half he takes and he carves an idol, and he bows down to it.

And Isaiah writes, starting in verse 16, he says, half of it he burns in the fire, over half he eats meat, he roasts it and he's satisfied, he warms himself, and the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it, and worships, and prays to it, deliver me.

And then a little bit farther down he says, no one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, half of it I burned in the fire, over half of it I made into an abomination, and then at the end he describes it as a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself.

That's the darkness. But to those who live in darkness, the light of the reality of God comes in Jesus.

Jesus himself makes God known. And so all of those who live in darkness, Jesus reintroduced, shines the light of the one that we were made to know.

[ 15 : 27 ] That we were made to know intimately. And we can know him only through this child who was born to us.

But that consolation which he said is not just in the light of the revelation of the Gentiles, it's also when he says glory for Israel. Now as I read this I ask, alright, why does he say glory?

Well it goes back again to this whole need of consolation. Because at this point in Israel's history, Israel has, they are existing under the strong repressive control of Rome.

In fact, they are a people really enslaved. They are not this great people of God who everybody else should be coming to.

They were the scorn of the world. They were oppressed. They were suppressed. They were depressed. And all they wanted was their freedom.

[ 16 : 40 ] They wanted again their dignity. They wanted to be these people that God promised them that they would be. But yet they lived under this force.

And they were derision. Not a people glorious. She was at the mercy of her enemies and were outcasts.

But what God promises in this Messiah is that to this people who are in oppression light, the glory has come.

Israel and this child is going to be the means of Israel being that people that God has promised to them they would be.

And this we see in Revelation because if you read on past in Revelation 21 into 22 you'll see even there that all of the nations of the world are going to come to Israel.

[ 17 : 47 ] Israel. They're going to come into the new Jerusalem. And this Messiah is going to take away their shame going to take away their oppression and they will no longer be scorned.

They will be the glorious glorious people that God created them to be. But this works not just on a corporate scale.

What Simeon sings of here is also true on a personal scale. And I think this is so much of why I love this passage.

Because we all live in a prison and that prison is shame. we are not the people that we want to be. We are not the people that we ought to be. We in many ways are the very people we don't want to be. And so we live in hiding.

[ 18 : 57 ] We live covering up ourselves. We live in fear of being exposed. Now something you need to know about me.

You hired me. So you need to know I'm an imposter. You know in so many ways I'm an imposter. I can present a pretty good image on the outside.

I clean up pretty well. But on the inside parts of it that you'll never see.

There is a sense where I live in great fear. Fear that you're going to really know who you've got. I live in hiding because I don't think you're going to like what's really here.

Because I don't like what's really here. Some people call that self-contempt. And I think it's a disease that we all share. You know some may think it's a psychological malady.

[ 20 : 09 ] I think it's the normal state of existence for mankind because we know instinctively down in our hearts that's not who we're made to be.

We are made for something else. And we live in this reality glory. That we're not that.

We were made to be beautiful in the image of God. We were made for glory. And we also know that we don't have it. Now we're we've just moved into a new house which we really like and we're excited to be here.

but one of the things about living here in this house is there's a lot of things that have to be done and that terrifies me because for example there were we had some light fixtures that we needed to replace in our bathroom and I said what's the big deal about light fixtures?

Well it's three wires wire nuts put them together screw it to the wall and boom it should work you know these nice eight lights up here over this big bathroom mirror and I put them up and only two of them work and I have no idea why but see now electricians got to come to the house gonna come first of the week and you know what the first thing he's gonna say who did that?

[ 21 : 51 ] And of course the temptation's gonna be he says well it was one of those deacons that came over to the house I might add I'm really appreciative of the deacons that came over to the house and have done a lot of things that I was too embarrassed to try to do but that kind of stuff exposes me exposes my incompetence so I just I hate doing that kind of stuff because you know it's not just that man you know you look back not just on those things that I do but I look back on my past and those years and unfortunately that Facebook continues to remind me about I shudder I shudder over the shame and sometimes I get paralyzed by the fear of being known and I want to be beautiful and I try to make myself that way and I just can't but the promise here is the

Messiah is bringing comfort and he's making all things new including me you know and too often I think when we think of the gospel our ideas of what the gospel does are truncated they're too small we think that yes he comes he's going to forgive us for the guilt of our sins and I'm not going to feel guilty anymore but that's not all he does he doesn't just come to release me of my shame I mean my sins he's come to set me free from my ugliness he's coming to bring glory in John 17 there is an incredible passage that just floors me every time I read it starting in verse 22

John writes the glory that you have given to me I have given to them who's them it's us Jesus has taken his glory he's given it's given it to us that they may be one even as we are I in them you and me that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you love me father I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory do you see what he wants for us what is

Jesus working towards here what does he come to do he's come to take what is ugly ugly by our own fault and turn us into beauty I mean I am beautiful use your imagination because I'm in Christ I am clothed with the garments of the bride I am beautiful and there's nothing nothing that can do anything to undo that all of us who are in

Christ we are no longer worthy of derision we are worthy of glory because the comforter the consolation of Israel has come tell you what that'll set you to sing as Simeon did but he goes on I wish he had stopped right there because he goes on and this is where it gets a little dicey and because Luke writes and Simeon blessed them and then said to Mary his mother behold this child is appointed for the rise and fall of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed and a sword will pierce through your own soul also so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed the sweet innocent child is armed and dangerous and what he's going to do he's going to upset everything on a corporate scale absolutely because the

[ 27 : 21 ] Messiah is going to come and turn everything upside down and this is a theme that's going to run all the way through the gospel of Luke that Jesus is turning society's values on their head and every place he comes he disrupts things Jesus never leaves things as they were no one is ever complacent in the presence of Jesus they either love him or he is opposed and he's still doing that but see he does this personally too on a personal level the most I think the most

disruptive thing you can do in life is to come to Jesus he comes to bring beauty and glory to our ugliness and our brokenness but to do that he has to disrupt things terribly and he will you know sometimes when I think about it

I wish that Jesus would just leave me let me be he says why can't I just be happy why can't I just be comfortable why can't we just have a nice little joy ride through life would it hurt well but that's not what he does you know several years ago he precipitated one of the darkest moments in my life and he did it through one of my children and I'm not going into all the details but he shook my world so seriously so hard that I thought I was going to lose my balance and I remember on this event being so hurt and angry at what he did in my life that I basically just crossed my arms and looked at him and says

I'm not playing with you anymore because you hurt me unfortunately I was a pastor then and I had to keep preaching how do you preach the good news of someone you don't like but see what he was doing he was not trying to destroy my faith he was trying to destroy a false foundation so that my faith real faith substantive faith would actually grow and so he was not trying to destroy me he was trying to build me up he was working for real joy in life not this false stuff that I pursued but he had to get that out of the way he was not trying to destroy my life and my faith he was just replacing it with something real and he's relentless in this pursuit of my heart he is relentless it is terribly disruptive you know all I want sometimes is would you please just leave me alone let me just be comfortable let me just have some rest here let me just have some quiet and he says no

I want more for you than that I want you to taste glory I want you to taste the sweetness of the kingdom him he's moving us to glory the savior has come with a sword in his hand to put our enemies to death in those enemies a lot of them are in our hearts now the question is how or why would I trust him to do that in me it's because this child who comes with a sword pointed it to himself he didn't come wielding the sword on me he came and wielded it on himself he didn't put me to death he put himself to death he died for my shame he died for my guilt he gave himself so that I could know life and joy and peace he and if that's the way he works we can trust him and so we can say to him Lord Jesus come come I want to know glory I want to know light I want to know life come do your work and I can trust you to do that let's pray Lord Jesus would you continue to show yourself to us show us your love your goodness and your mercy would you come and pursue our hearts would you bring us to glory would you show us the vanity of trying to cover up our own shame and would you draw us to the place where we say to you my comforter my consolation [ 33 : 49 ] I am yours now bring the glory for which I was made we pray in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at [southwood.org](http://southwood.org)